



PATTERNS

4 2 N D E D I T I O N

APRIL 2000



PATTERNS



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PREFACE

The writer is only free when he can tell the reader to go jump in the lake.

-Flannery O'Connor

Kurt Vonnegut used to say to his class at Iowa, "You've got to be a good date for the reader."

-John Casey

If two of the better writers in the English language can't agree on how to treat the reader, then odds are the writers and artists in these pages will contradict one another - and maybe you - as well. And that's good. Art is not about comforting us it's about provoking us.

So the 42nd edition of *Patterns* is not soothing. Not much, anyway. But it's interesting - from the colors and cover design to the art that jumps out and the words that invite us in. The writers and artists whose work appears in these pages have created a dissonant and compelling world. But this creation belongs to you, the reader, as well. As Ursula K. Le Guin has said, "[r]eaders, after all, are making the world."

Turn the pages, then, and create.

biographies

Jane Bradley is the author of the short-story collection, *Power Lines* (University of Arkansas Press), a book that was widely praised by reviewers and was listed as an Editor's Choice by The New York Times Book Review. Her novel, *Living Doll*, was also well-received and has been used in many graduate education and internship programs. She has received a National Endowment of the Arts and an Ohio Arts Council Fellowship, and she has received awards for her plays and a screenplay. She currently is an Associate Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Toledo.

Tim Geiger has recently published a full length book of poems, *Blue Light Factory*. He is also the author of six chapbooks of poetry, the latest being *Migratory Patterns*. His poems have been published in many anthologies and journals throughout the country. He has won a Pushcart Prize for poetry, the Brittingham Poetry Award, and an Otto Bremer Foundation Grant. In addition to his MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Alabama, he has an MFA in Bookmaking and teaches the art of bookmaking at the University of Toledo where he is an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing. He is the founding editor of *Whirligig: A Journal of the Language Arts* and publisher of the Aureole Press.

We just can't leave this thing alone. *Patterns* has won national awards, is read in our high schools, has provoked many conversations by readers, but every year we get together and mess with it some more. This year's no different.

And once again we think *Patterns* better. And in fussing with it, in caring about getting the excellent works of our writers and artists out to you, the reader, in the most appealing way, we are carrying on a fine tradition - one that goes back to 1958.

So we thank those who have inspired us to work on *Patterns*, and we thank those two wonderful writers who judged the writing of this year's edition. **Jane Bradley** and **Tim Geiger** have been generous with their time and their talents, and because of that we have a stronger magazine, and the writers whose work appears here have benefitted by their commentary as well.

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natalie tomlin

THE FALL OF SUPERMAN

FIRST PLACE POETRY

BLANCHE REDMAN poetry award

This year's First Place Award and the Blanche Redman Poetry Award are awarded to Natalie Tomlin, author of "The Fall of Superman," a poem about an estranged father's half-hour dinner-visit with his daughter, and the ensuing emotional turmoil which the meeting arouses.

One thing that sets this poem apart is the ease with which it formulates concise language into the image – "imagine morph" – then builds a narrative from those images, as a cinematographer might map out the scenes of a film. The narrative is fragmented and jarring, as it should be, and tells its story through a series of brief images/scenes that imply a whole lot more than they tell on the surface. Beginning with the transformation from "numb suit wearing father," to "dick. thespian. dad."; the poet draws us into the emotional battle between the man and the "Masked nod of darling daughter." Quickly, the scene escalates to "...a toe curling war under the table," and "spilled vanilla milkshake" leading to the girl's only resolution: escape as "nun. Buddha. vortex."

Likewise, the poem uses its structure to convey the narrative by employing the repetition of brief, three image catalogs. These catalogs seem to capture the essence of both the fathers' and the daughters' transformation. From the father as "boy. sheep. professional." to the daughter as "vulture. Mother Theresa. fawn."; it's as if the characters undergo a metamorphosis in the span of three words. And they do, but it is a far different metamorphosis than that experienced by the comic book hero Superman. The speaker recognizes this, and recognizes the real turbulence existing underneath all the disguises and facades.

By taking its opening statement – "imagine morph" – to heart, this poem demonstrates originality in structure and imagery, two qualities so valued by the teacher and poet, Blanche Redman.

-Tim Geiger

Imagine morph.
boy. sheep. professional.
Numb suit wearing father.
hurls workaholism to dollar-eyed wife.
whirling transformation in phone booth,
dick. thespian. dad.
Unfold the usual low budget stage—
Across cracked formica girl.
vulture. Mother Teresa. fawn.
Masked nod of darling daughter.
"When you were a baby,
I used to read you *Time* magazine."
Her mud covered toes curl under the table.
As he brushed his slick hair with golden rings.
spilled vanilla milkshake
6 butts in ashtray.
Misbehavior strips dad of disguise,
nun. Buddha. Vortex.

PRISONERS: AUSCHWITZ

PATRICK BOURKE AWARD

anthony stewart



PATRICK BOURKE visual arts award

As the recipient of the Patrick Bourke Award for an outstanding Visual Arts student, **Anthony Stewart** has shared his enthusiasm for design through his many posters marketing the ARTS at the college. His *Patterns* entry *Prisoners: Auschwitz* is a drawing study which was part of his research for the posters and displays advertising the Theatre Discipline's fall play, "The Diary of Anne Frank."

In December, the Music, Theatre, and Arts Disciplines collaborated on a presentation of Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf" and again Anthony was in the middle of it all with his computer generated illustrations of the Russian fable. These were transferred into slides and became an integral part of live music, dramatic reading and, of course, Anthony's illustrations.

Anthony's involvement in writing and poetry has also placed him in the center of the college's new series of poetry readings. He is interested in sharing, stimulating and involving anyone who wants to discover and participate in the arts. Anthony is a spokesman for the ARTS at St. Clair County Community College and this is just the beginning.

linda mountz

THE SYMBOL SAYS DO NOT

FIRST PLACE SHORT STORY

ELEANOR B. MATHEWS writing award

Jane Bradley says that **Linda Mountz** "conveys both interior and exterior worlds" in her story "The Symbol Says Do Not." This is true of much of Mountz's work, from her essay "Decisions, Decisions" in which the student's casual crossing of a street belies her inner anxiety at returning to college, to last year's *Patterns*' poem, "Always Ready," in which a mother is "[t]rying to stay calm" while her son shows off his new driving skills. She succeeds in appearing calm, but inside she is in turmoil.

The contrast of interior and exterior worlds gives us a glimpse into the fragmented lives of not only the characters in her works, but into the fragmented culture in which we all must operate. No matter the genre - Mountz has published short stories, poems, and an essay in the last two issues of *Patterns* - she captures the fragmented nature of our lives.

Because of her versatility, because of the economical yet powerful nature of her work, and because she has published in *Patterns* two years running, Linda Mountz is this year's Eleanor B. Mathews recipient. And while the tension between interior and exterior worlds, a hallmark of much of **Linda Mountz's** work, can make us uncomfortable, it also provides us with compelling reading.

VACANCY. Blink. ADULTERY. Blink. IMMORAL. Blink. AFFAIR. Blink. WRONG. Blink. The words run through Beth's mind, keeping time to the pattern of the vacancy sign blinking through the crack in the curtains. She lies in bed, watching the smoke from his cigarette swirl around, thinking that she can't stand even being in a room when others are smoking, but here she is, not just in a room, but in a bed with someone smoking.

The vacancy light continues to flash outside the window while her thoughts drift away from the smoke. This is the third time they've actually been together, the third motel they've taken a room at. If someone had asked her, though, when she thought the affair started, she'd have to say it was the first time she heard him laugh, back at the office party in July. It was always the laughter that she found attractive, not the eyes, smiles, or particular body parts. When she'd scanned the room, trying to tell where the laughing was coming from, she'd spotted him. The laugh was his. And so was the cigarette that he held in his hand. He'd looked up as she'd started to look away and the affair began.

She's brought back to the present by that very same laugh. She sees his underwear hanging on the bathroom doorknob as she realizes he's found something funny on one of the comedy channels, but instead of the laugh being attractive, she finds it ANNOYING. Blink. IRRITATING. Blink. AGGRAVATING. Blink. Her mind is back to keeping time with the vacancy sign.

For not the first time, she tries to figure out how she's ended up in an affair. It's wrong; she knows that. But what she knows and how she feels are two different things. Up until Derek, what she knew kept how she felt in control. As hard as she tries, she can't figure out what was different this time.

His voice cuts through her thoughts. "Hey, Hon, hand me the ashtray from your nightstand."

Great, she thinks. I wonder how many cigarettes it'll take to fill this one up? Reaching over, she finds the ashtray, upside down. Her hand brushes her wedding ring, almost knocking it off the nightstand. While picking them both up, she realizes there's a sticker on the bottom of the ashtray. Turning it over, she sees the universal symbol for "Do Not Smoke." Beth hands him the ashtray, slips on her wedding ring, and gets out of bed to dress. The sign outside the window blinks VACANCY.

THRILLED

FIRST PLACE

joel vile



natalie tomlin

THE MUSIC CRITIC

RICHARD J. COLWELL AWARD

RICHARD J. COLWELL short story award

For the Richard J. Colwell Award, I've chosen "The Music Critic," a very quirky and disturbing story with a deceptively sedate title. Given Mr. Colwell's penchant for the unusual and quirky in short stories, I feel this story would intrigue him with the writer's evocation of a girl's experience of life as something akin to a bad and dull acid trip. The writer's strategy of infusing the mundane details of daily life with a spooky sense of madness certainly recreates the far-reaching and sometimes sadly fantastic places the mind can go when as the writer says, "nothing soothes or burns." The story is a rough piece that goes out on the dangerous edge of things and succeeds.

-Jane Bradley

David went off to shop for comic books next door. Just before he left, he grasped her skull in his palms. He whispered his recycled love stories, rocking her back and forth. Laura let him love her with his chapped lips, with fingers that caught in the snarls of her hair. She avoided his eyes. On tiptoes, Laura burrowed her head into the warm valley of his chest. They were alone in the parking lot. The spittle of morning rain dashed onto the blacktop. Droplets struck their skin, neither dripping nor drying. Surrounding them was cracked blacktop littered with foil, dead fish flies. She peered over his shoulder, seeing a freeway of speeding cars. The vague dawn met the street with a tiny glow. The cars sped away and were gone. Only dark tire stripes swiped the watery road. She hated how she could never catch the lines dying. Erased, leaving no process, remnants or objection. Only the wet road lying in surrender, awaiting the next car. It was like the elusive inching of a clock's hands, she thought. Across an expressway was a park tucked into a grove of trees. The newborn sun filtered through branches, hitting and spreading across puddles that sat far from muddy flattened banks of snow. She followed a man's figure that darted through the blackened trunks. David wanted to know how long she would be. She let his chubby lips sag and frown. She laughed manically as she saw dirty shoes and mismatched socks bolt across the parking lot. Laura noticed his sagging face. He was impatient all the same. She saw the four stray hairs in the middle of his cheek that he always missed, that she always made fun of. They looked heavy and dirty. No, this wasn't a dentist's appointment. She wished to tell him to return in an hour and then enjoy cold curb, sitting for forty-five minutes when the tooth scraping took only fifteen. Laura bit her nails and thought of her mother. It had stopped raining, and Laura stepped from the stoop to stretch her body. Her eyes searched David as he counted hundreds. His wide long hands, filmy gray skin, huge rounded knees, crotch. She found nothing that soothed or burned her. His words hung soiled and foreign, and she let them drop. Her forehead was beaded with sweat. She turned away, walking.

Across the street, a man had a child with long hair perched on his shoulders. They could barely be seen in the dark shade under trees. Suddenly the man took off running. The morning light flashed fast upon them, their figure a canvas to the strikes of the infant sun's blinding white. The fetal paint was hot as it swirled and danced on their skin, only to be broken with swipes of shady black as the man bolted further. With her hands stretched into the trees, the girl shook the rain from the leaves. She tilted her head, droplets falling to her skin. A high frivolous laugh echoed to Laura. The static of a passing car sucked the sound from her ears.

The nurse didn't question her, or even look her in the eyes. On her starched straight uniform were pins of smiling faces and pictures of kids. She simply gave her a clipboard with fifteen pages of forms. Laura sat far from everyone, sinking into a plastic chair that poked hard at her backbone. Like a worm, she squirmed as her head began to pulse and widen with blood. The waiting room walls were decorated with Easter eggs and thank you letters. The room was filled with women and the smell of medicine and sickness that always brought annoying aches to Laura's body. She tried to distract herself by looking at the people. One had a wrinkled brow and was crammed into an orange sweatsuit. A sour-faced man sat next to her. From the sleeve of his flannel came a hand that gripped hers as if it was his job. A tarnished, chipped ring

hung loose on his finger. The woman's ankles were gripped by the pink elastic, red and swollen. Out of her worn leather slippers peeked the yellow of callused soles.

Laura thought of herself at a chirping seven, crawling into bed with her mother. She was very pregnant, her swollen belly urging the covers up, forming a colorful quilted mountain. Laura brought her orange rind tea with honey and rubbed eucalyptus lotion into her cold beaten soles. She stopped when they became warm and glowed, smooth and white.

Laura had gotten to the fifth page, but kept stopping, distracted. The whispering sounds in the room invited her to listen. Across the room, a clean shaven man sat on the edge of his seat, bent solidly forward, his folded hands dangling between his knees. He was earnest, spurring constant comments. A woman replied quickly with tight lips, leaving him to rock back and forth. He was content until he thought of more to say. The woman was confident, her back straight and formal in a maroon sweater. At times she would smile softly after her words. He peered up, mirroring her smile, relaxed by her. Like everyone else in the room, their eyes never left *The Today Show* report of today's recipes and sunshine. A report came of a woman who had sextuplets. There was shifting and coughing. Hands were squeezed. Laura wanted to avoid the TV. She wasn't like these women. She had no need for escape. She listened to Katie Couric mingle with everything else.

Nurses spoke in their fake comforting tones behind the door next to her. She felt as if she was ahead of the rest, as if she knew what was to come. The nurses' legs brushed the starched uniforms with sharp swipes. Marching fast, their rubber shoes squeaked on polished floor. Like softspoken vampires, they tapped veins, telling jokes to trick, drawing blood as their victims giggled. Laura squeezed her knees together until the bones clenched and hurt. She saw the nurses rushing around. She saw one bring her finger to the tape player's play button.

The trembling of violin strings fluttered to Laura's ears. The orchestra fell over the sounds behind the door like a heavy velvet curtain. Untamed and fervent, the music enclosed Laura. Spiked thoughts became feathered, easy. Her knees were limp as she closed her eyes, watching florescent lightning play across her lids. The deep throat of the cello seemed to devour the morbid room, swallowing her puncturing pangs and the tapping of waiting women. The sound flowed as if an endless thread through fabric. Yet a knot came, and Laura flinched, as if she was dreaming, as if she had awoken to avoid death. She looked around the room and saw that a few had left but everyone was still transfixed on the screen of moving pictures, frozen and surreal. It wailed again, and like a shy opera singer, it grew in momentum. Laura stood and looked through the glass window. A nervous nurse was turning up the volume. Her lips puckered when she saw Laura watching, angry. Can I help you? Laura shrank into her plastic seat. She waited. No, it was only music! The intricate intellectual kind that was preformed in huge hollow halls. But no. The scream had begun to penetrate the screen of music. It was strong, it climbed on, it was a woman. Her moan was reminiscent of sex, like the slow approach to the tip of orgasmic cliff. Yet it began to sting. Shards of glass were pushed from her voice, cutting Laura's womb. Laura felt her

face sag and lose blood. The screams came with fat force, poking Laura's eyes from inside. Her eyes ripped through the room, sending messages to them through the strings of her mind. She looked at the door, imagining that David lost his interest in comics. Nothing. She was surrounded by them as they held hands, balanced checkbooks, played footsie. They snuggled in the safety of the music.

As Laura was wheeled away, she asked to have the music turned off. The nurse talked to her like an unwanted baby. Her pantyhosed thighs rubbed and scratched like two sheets of sandpaper. Laura then asked if she could be gassed.

karen gorski

SALLY'S GIRL

THIRD PLACE



CHAOS

SECOND PLACE

brittany grenstiner



A MAN NAMED LAVERNE

FIRST PLACE ESSAY

No one in the family knows why Grandmother named him Laverne. As children, he and his brother, Leigh, were the feistiest of the eleven. The brothers had countless verbal and physical school yard altercations about their gender. Eventually, Laverne was known as "Vern." Some friends and co-workers called him "Mack." Family members tactfully avoided reference to his given name. As an adult, Vern's personality had tempered, but there were topics that would ignite his passion.

Vern was very proud of his Irish Catholic roots and grateful to be an American. His grandfather, who was born in Ireland, was orphaned at twelve and lost all property rights because of his religion. At fourteen, he earned passage to America on a cattle boat and later pioneered a homestead near Dexter, Michigan. Disparaging remarks about the Irish would turn Vern's face to crimson and cause his blood pressure to rise. He was equally confounded and exasperated by Irish who were prejudiced toward minorities. He was quick to remind them that their immigrant parents and grandparents had suffered from similar discrimination. Vern had his own painful memories of window signs, during the Depression: "Irish need not apply."

Vern firmly believed in the power of prayer. His faith sustained him through the losses of an infant daughter, a young son to a land mine in the Pacific the final days of the war, and of another son to cancer. Vern himself fought and won a battle with the same disease. He outlived, by thirty years, the surgeon who said he had six months to live.

Politics was a source of animated rhetoric. Although he was a "white collar" worker, Vern identified with poor and working class Americans of the thirties and forties. He accorded the same respect to the black man who shined shoes as to corporate executives and fellow workers. He was a great admirer of Franklin D. Roosevelt. As the sole Democrat in his wartime carpool, Vern took delight in "holding his own" and often winning a round with his companions in their spirited political debates. Upon his retirement, co-workers presented him with a bronzed statuette of a mule, head down, ears pointed straight forward, and its hind legs kicking wildly. The inscription read, "Mack, The Eternal Democrat."

Vern's vices were limited to mixing an occasional Manhattan and smoking cigars to the shortest of stubs. He did not readily laugh at his own foibles or embarrassing moments.

His sons tell about a certain fishing trip when the boys were young teens. As they were about to shove off from shore, Vern reiterated his boating safety lecture: "No horseplay, no standing up, no leaning over the side, and no rocking the boat!" While the boat was still in shallow water, Vern noticed there were weeds entangled in the outboard motor. As he leaned over to extract them, several coveted cellophane-wrapped cigars fell from his pocket and began to float away. Frugality overcame caution as Vern frantically lunged forward to retrieve them. He fell flat out into the murky water. When he emerged, his mop of white hair was stringing over his forehead, his eyes were wide open, and a soggy cigar stub was clenched between his teeth. In one hand, he upheld the recovered cigars. With the other, he snatched his

straw hat as it floated by. The boys managed to suppress their outbursts of laughter until safely out of earshot as they ran up the hill to tell the family about the incident.

Confusion generated by his given name continued to plague and irk him. We frequently heard about situations evoked by "Laverne," such as mail advertisements for feminine products, phone solicitations for "Laverne, the lady of the house," and persons overlooking the box checked "M" on insurance forms and other official papers. Even his own church was responsible for a moment to remember.

Before it was frequent practice to prepay for one's own funeral, Vern contracted to have his remains shipped from Florida to his east side suburban Detroit parish for the funeral rite, then transported to a far west side cemetery for the graveside ritual and internment. A luncheon for the mourners was also arranged by Vern. When the time came, everything was dutifully carried out as instructed. However, the parish priest could not make the cross-town trip, so a call was made to a monastery near the cemetery requesting a monk to officiate at the graveside service.

Vern's casket was already in place, and mourners were gathered under the canopy when the young priest arrived. He began, "Absolve we beseech Thee, O Lord, the soul of thy servant, Laverne, that she who is dead to the world..." The first outburst was that of his sister, Elaine, who quickly stifled her giggles into her handkerchief.

"Eternal rest unto her, O Lord..." A ripple of suppressed chuckles began with his children in the front row and became a growing current throughout the assembly. Those without handkerchiefs bowed their heads and shaded their faces to mask their grins and contortions. We attempted the proper response, "and let the perpetual light shine upon..." Some said "him," and some said, "her" which heightened our improper reactions. By the time the young cleric intoned, "May she rest in peace," we were nearly out of control. Seeing how "distraught" we were, he attempted to comfort us further with words of hope and condolence upon the loss of our "dear departed mother and sister in Christ." Shoulders were shaking and stifled chuckles clearly resembled uncontrollable sobs.

No one had the heart to tell the young man of his error, but it was the topic of the day at the luncheon. Aunt Elaine surmised that Vern took a couple spins inside the casket. Others could mentally hear his voice protesting throughout the rite. But, perhaps it was Uncle Vern's way of giving us a laugh and reminding us to celebrate his life because, all the while, God knew what and who he was.

melissa hutchinson

FLOWERS

SELECTION OF MERIT



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2 AL(LEAV)IATE

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

anthony stewart

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SAID

anthony stewart

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

...i never say what i mean at first
hardly meaning to be what is said
one big corny ball of brashness
choking on fake sweaters.

hanging on what needs to be ashes
by need
buy thread
wedded to condolences

a picture writes a thousand words
each of which with numerous meaning
if all could reach a spiritual essence
instead is said
say what you mean...

Four weeks ago, I dragged myself out of bed early, sat down in front of a computer, and wrote a poem. It was a simple poem, the kind that you just spit out in a hurry when it's due in class that day. Naturally, it came out in a pathetic, pseudo-iambic rhythm, but what did I care? This was only a rough draft, after all. However, somewhere in my subconscious mind, the poem wasn't being written; it was being born. There, in the depths of thought that I can't normally access, this piece of last minute B.S. was shaping itself, because what I did not know is that this poem had escaped as a little snippet of my life. From there, the poem generated a life of its own.

Later that morning, I handed in the rough draft for that poem. Within a week, I had received revision recommendations from my instructor and my classmates. It was when I took these comments home and sat down with them that I began noticing something odd about the poem.

It occurs to me that poems aren't genuinely described as living things, but the experience of revising this poem has convinced me otherwise. Still, they are hardly the subjects of study in any biological or psychological sense, so coming up with terms to describe the growth of this poem has been arbitrary at best. The poem, as I said, was born that bleary-eyed morning before class. The newborn looked like this:

Claustrophobia

Another pile of receipts
Spread across the floor
Another abundance of bills
Every day at least two more
The car needs work again
Radiator alternator or some damn thing blew
Oh yeah, and I just remembered
I've got a load of homework to do.

Now, it's pretty clear that this poem had some personality. Admittedly, it was the kind that you find in the high school students who think that being able to generate rhyme makes them the next Byron or Dickinson, but it's still personality. And this first draft is what was staring me in the face when I realized that, annoying as it was, this had grown on me – or out of me, as the case may be. I was actually eager to begin working on it further.

Of course, revisions were a required part of the assignment. But somehow, the process seemed a little different at four in the afternoon than it had at seven in the morning, and it wasn't just the fatigue level. In some way, I knew that I was

uncovering a secret truth that had escaped from me and into the poem without my notice. The poem itself, however, seemed to be fighting to keep that secret. I fought right back. "I created you; you have to do what I say!" I'd say to it. Yet the frustration of the revision process seemed to be the poem's way of telling me, "Forget it. I'm not telling you anything until I'm good and ready." This was definitely the poem's adolescent rebellion stage. When the poem was "good and ready," it came out like this"

Damsel in Distress (formerly) Claustrophobia

Another pile of receipts is spread all over my floor.
And I tell my son to get the mail,
Because I quake in fear to look inside that cavern of despair
Where the collection dragon rears its ugly head,
Snaps its jaws, and wrings the last drip of hope from this bloodless stone.
But even if I should escape
(Maybe there are still knights-errant for this sort of thing)
I still need only look to my car to see another omen of doom.
The radiator, alternator, carburetor, or some damned "-ator" thing blew up,
And the hood is black with soot where Lucifer's breath billowed through.
But when the Knight-Errant gets home, he can take care of it,
And I'll face the dragon as stoically as I can
Because right now
I've got to organize my receipts.

Where the hell did that come from? I had a sing-songy poem of frustration when I started, and now it had turned into a wannabe *Faerie Queen*. Yet this came from my hands – didn't it? Of course, it was my pencil that had sketched the rewriting, my word processor that had committed it to type. Yet, this new version had clearly come from the poem itself. It was too far from my original intent, so much that it had even caused a change in the narrator. I wouldn't have consciously done that, but the poem, as part of its game of hide and seek, would. I know this because, yet again, a valuable clue to the poem's secret had escaped in this second draft. It clearly had two separate moods: one taking on the epic metaphor, the other remaining true to my original draft. I didn't even notice this until my instructor pointed it out to me. I was staggered. The poem had presented me with a choice. I had to decide which way would lead to the best final version of the poem. Should I remain true to the poem's roots, or should I take it fully into this new direction? At this stage, the poem had clearly just graduated from high school.

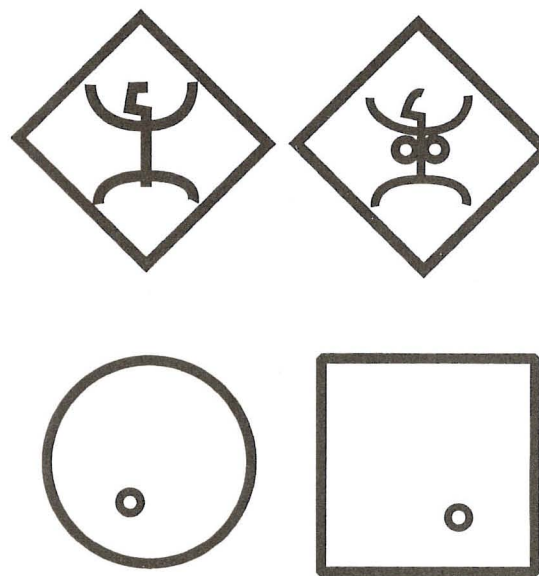
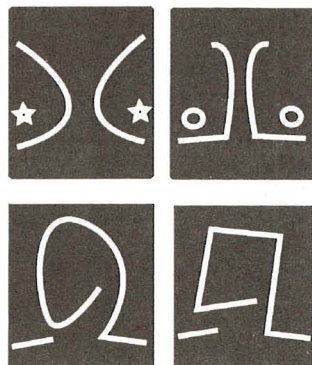
I must be honest, however. I haven't yet made that decision. Now, before you crumple these pages in disgust, allow me to tell you why I've led you along the life of this poem without being able to tell you what it ultimately grew up to be. My reason, actually, is simple. What you've just read is a fully matured piece of writing, much like the poem will be one day. My experience with this poem has significantly altered the way I view the process in which I write. To me now, all my first drafts are births, and the subsequent revisions are stages in the life of the work. When I write something, I give it life, much the same way a parent gives life to a child. After this, it's my responsibility to guide the piece to maturity, making decisions for it until it can stand on its own as a finished work.

If all this explanation of my intentions still has not satisfied your curiosity about the final version of the poem, keep your eyes open. If it's worth a fraction of the trouble it's given me so far, it's bound to end up in the pages of poetry text-books for years to come.

dieutin tran

SIGN

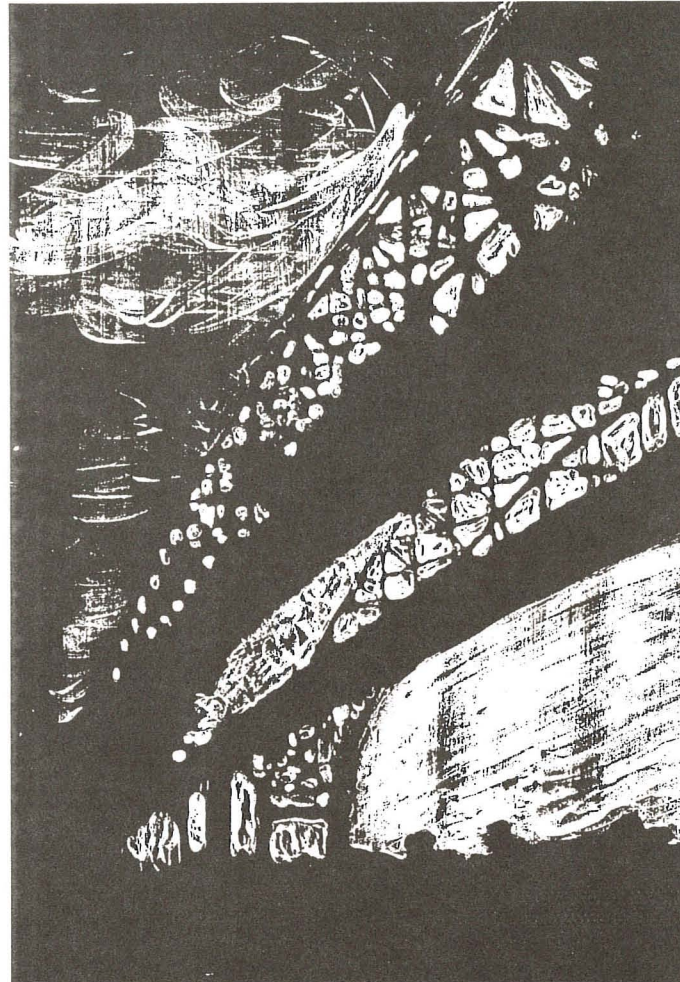
SELECTION OF MERIT



BRIDGE A LA NOCHE

SELECTION OF MERIT

lindsey kanas



P A T T E R N S 4 2 N D E D I T I O N - P A G E 1 9

WHAT REMAINS

SECOND PLACE SHORT STORY

It is 2:00 a.m. and she has the urge to iron some clothes. Calculus homework set aside, she slips rumpled shirts from their color-coded positions in her closet. Various hangers knock against the rod and drop to the floor. In four hours she has to be up for college. Her eyes hurt to think about it.

Instead of focusing on homework, she is focusing on the collar of a burgundy button-up. She tells herself she is ironing for her own enjoyment - to relieve stress, but the collar will not straighten and suddenly she is not feeling quite as "relieved" anymore. She sets the iron down hard and it lashes back, falling against her hand and singeing it.

Despite unfinished calculus homework and a wrinkled shirt, she goes to bed. Her hand hurts, but she thinks of other things. Like how she found twenty dollars in the pocket of her jeans and how her niece can use the potty-chair now. The minutes tick by. She is wondering how she will manage to do her work tomorrow after a sleepless night. Mentally, she rearranges her drawer space and counts to one thousand.

In the morning everything is the same - the calculus homework, the wrinkled shirt, and burnt hand. She showers and dresses; picks up her backpack and checks - purple folder in front, green in back; her history book in the middle. She organizes her notebooks while her mother makes blueberry muffins from a box and updates her on the neighbor's patio. She nods her head to the conversation and dips her finger in the pasty batter.

She lets her mother's gossip go on for a little longer. Across from the barstool where she's sitting she can see herself in the oval mirror and her empty expression as her mom chats on about the contractor who forgot to lay the cement on the 15th. She's wondering how this has anything to do with her and even before she has answered this question herself she's asked her mother. There's instant tension.

"Excuse me that it's so annoying for you to listen to me talk," her mother shoots out.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I just couldn't sleep last night and I'm really tired." Her mother doesn't look up, but has stopped mixing the muffins.

"Why?" Her mother asks.

She wonders if she heard forced concern. "I burnt my hand." She pauses and waits, but she's not getting the comfort she was searching for. "When I set the iron down, it fell against me."

Her mother does not look up, but replies, "Why would you do that?" It seems like more of a putdown than a question and suddenly she has had enough.

"Yeah, Mom and I did it on purpose," she says sarcastically and walks out.

It is 11:30 p.m. In an all night diner, at a table for two, her friend Chris is playing the concerned friend. He waits for the waitress to finish refilling their sodas and he leans closer. "You know, you never make up for lost sleep." She nods her head. "Not even on the weekends," he adds, lights a cigarette and leans back. "And your eyes look yellow." She sighs and picks up the bill, ready to leave. "Don't get all angry now - just get some sleep." He pats her hand and heads for the bathroom.

While he is gone, she rummages through her bag until she comes across her pocket mirror. She focuses on her eyes, bypassing the unsightly zit on her forehead, and ignores her eyebrows, which need plucking. Maybe it is true that she does not get much sleep anymore, but she feels assured that her eyes do not look yellow. She reminds herself that Chris can often get carried away and carefully replaces her pocket mirror, trying to act nonchalant when he comes back.

On the ride back to her house, they get into a conversation about what was exactly meant by the yellow-eyes statement and it's midnight before Chris drops her off. She told her mother she would be home at 11:00 p.m. When she turns to open the door, her mother is standing in the entrance.

"Where have you been?" The age-old question thunders at her. She sees mascara under her mother's eyes and wonders if it is because she was crying or just has on cheap mascara. The thought of her mother crying because of her is too much and suddenly, more than anything, she wishes she had made it home on time, but it seems too late.

She walks past. Her mother follows her into her bedroom. Calculus homework, scattered hangers and her burgundy button-up litter the room. She cannot handle the disarray, she cannot handle herself for not being home on time, and she cannot handle that her mother does not understand her life.

"I'm leaving." The words are out before she can stop them. She feels like maybe she did not say them, but the look on her mother's face - as it hardens - tells her otherwise. She wonders if that face was ever young.

Her hand does not hurt anymore, but she still cannot sleep. She thinks about paying rent and about getting a second job. She thinks about the girl in her English class with the perfect skin and the guy from debate club that always has his zipper down.

She wonders if she can hear mother crying in the next room and remembers how when in fifth grade all the other girls in class got invited to Samantha's birthday party, so her mother took her shopping and out to eat.

In the morning, nothing seems different: homework, hangers, her burgundy shirt still litter her room. She surveys the disaster and wonders how she could possibly rearrange her life right now. She steps out of bed and heads for the bathroom. She's cautious when passing the kitchen. She doesn't see her mother, but on the counter is a blueberry muffin.

DOG ON BEACH **heather herrmann-miller**

SECOND PLACE POETRY

A beefy, black rottweiler
stares at me curiously,
wondering what I'm doing
on a cold morning,
alone.

He plunges his thick body
into icy waters,
dancing and whisking.
I beg him with my eyes
to abandon the frigid lake,
but he grins,
(as only dogs can do)
and swims further
away.

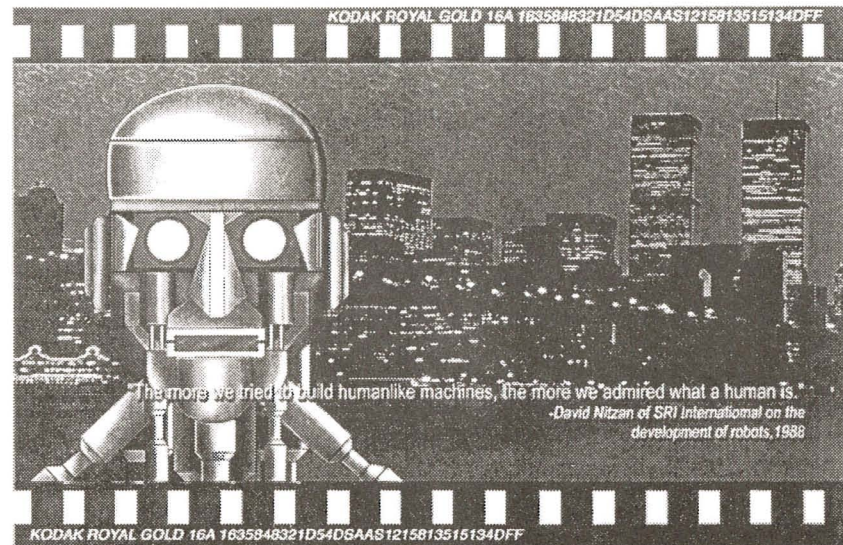
She stops. With the muffin is a note that says, "It's your decision and I love you no matter what." She repeats it to herself and considers what her decision is.

She hears her mother singing in the back room. She watches her fold towels and before her mother even knows she's there, she hugs her from behind. "Did you hear that the contractor still hasn't poured the cement at the Smiths'," she asks as her mother smiles.

dieutin tran

MANKIND

SELECTION OF MERIT



DECISIONS, DECISIONS

SELECTION OF MERIT ESSAY

linda mountz

The way I figured it, I had two, maybe three, choices. I could've stood right where I was, on the curb, looking at the building across the street from me. Or I could've walked around the streets of Port Huron for the next hour, until my husband came back to pick me up. It was early January, though, and the combination of cold and falling snow made me rule out those two choices. My only option then, was to cross the street and enter the building, just like all the other college students around me. As I watched them, hurrying from one building to another, sometimes in groups of two or three, I wondered how they could all appear to be so confident, so sure of what they were doing and where they were going, even though they all looked like they were only eighteen, maybe nineteen, years old. While I on the other hand, at the age of thirty-eight, had asked my husband to take the day off work to drive me to my first class. As I stood there, still looking at the building, trying to find an easy way out, I wondered what had made me decide to register for a class in the first place.

All the reasons came back in a rush. For fourteen years I had been a full-time, stay-at-home mom. My children were all in school full-time now, which left me with way too many hours in the day to just spend by myself. There was only so much cleaning to be done; when I picked the toys up in the morning, they stayed put away until later that day. Laundry was done by 10:00, there were no spills to wipe up, and there was no one around to watch Sesame Street with. I was tired of Donahue, Oprah, and Kelly & Co. Radio stations seemed to play the same ten songs over and over again, on a rotating basis. I guess whoever programmed the music didn't take into account people like me, at home with too much time on their hands, being able to guess what song was next, just by the time of the day. I was tired of mixing and matching my sweatpants and sweatshirts in a game that I called, "What should I wear today?" I missed having someone to take a nap and share lunch with, and I also missed having someone to read a story to while we snuggled in the rocking chair.

I was also tired, though, of waiting for my children and husband to come home, so I could once again feel like I was part of someone else's day. I wanted to be able to tell them what I had done while they were off doing their own things, and I wanted to be able to tell them something more than I straightened out the bathroom closet and all the kitchen drawers that day. When I wrote letters to my friends, I didn't want to just write about what was new with my husband and children – I wanted to say something more about me than "I've been fine, will write again soon."

There were too many days when the only reason I left the house was to either put my handicapped son on the bus for school, or to help him off when he came home. There were also too many days that that same bus was the only reason I got out of my pajamas and robe; I sure didn't want the bus driver to see me still dressed like that at 3:30 in the afternoon. More and more, there were also becoming too many days when I'd just go back to bed after everyone had left, only to wake up at noon, wondering what I was going to do with the three hours that were still left until the kids came home.

The memories of that day, waiting on the curb, wondering why I was even there, came back to me on a warm evening in May, a little over four years later. As I waited in line with the other graduates, I was reminded of the butterflies in my stomach that day when I finally crossed the street. Butterflies that were once helplessly trapped, desperately flapping their wings in an effort to be free, were now fluttering quietly, softly, content with where they were as I walked across the stage to receive my diploma.

tobi couture

VICIOUS ROSES

SELECTION OF MERIT

I fell into roses
Pretty, but they cut me
Thrilling for the moment
But a guilty, guilty pleasure
For missing my day's monotone
While wrapped up in you

Enslaved by these roses
Summer breath heats my neck
Choking on heavy perfume
Which still tastes divine

Legs tangled in rose teeth
Looks like I've grown with them
The damp ground cools my feet
A shattered vase for your blooms

MRS. SHUE

SELECTION OF MERIT

jonathan potts



P A T T E R N S 4 2 N D E D I T I O N - P A G E 2 5

heather herrmann-miller

BANANA MAN

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

VACATION FOR ONE PLEASE heather herrmann-miller

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

Silver lake,
turned color mostly
because of my tears,
and yearly return.

I walk along
diminishing dunes,
brush sand off the
seat of my pants,
and envision you
in your yellowed
fisherman's hat.

Funny, how I
always arrive at the
death of summer,
and drive home with
brown leaves on the
floor mats of my car.

Vintage-wine eyes of Guseppi Mazzola
grin at me in the wrinkled and yellow
print from 1893.

Solemnly he stands with his black-eyed son,
lineage temporarily set aside
for something better than garlic-filled winds,
and roasted pepper sunsets.
"Venica," he commands. "Come here."

Tugging a battered cart along irregular
cobblestone streets he begins his profession:
Banana Man -
Produce King -
careful not to bruise fruit with bricklayer's hands,
callused and brown from age and tobacco.
"Venica," he says to passersby, "come here."

His eyes grow dim and clouded.
Shoulders and back ache from bursting bags laden
with oranges, apples, bananas, and occasionally,
if times are good, squash and pumpkins.
Urchins mob him, jostle his goods,
distract and steal from
my old, foreign grandfather.
"Venica," he shouts, "come here."

Rosemary and basil daydreams
take him with fondness,
to memories, flaring his nostrils.
Biting Michigan winds and
the sharp smell of manure from his
horse and cart jerk him back.
"Venica," he cries. "Come here."

UNTITLED
SELECTION OF MERIT

zachary aaron ostrowski



In less than three seconds, an eternity passed. The road ahead of Eric's car was visible for only a hundred yards, where the headlights met with a thick, unyielding fog. A shape began to emerge from that fog, and Eric's mind had barely informed him of the danger ahead before he realized it was a deer. As it stood in the middle of the lane, its eyes reflected the headlights like two polished, black stones set in sand. Eric slammed the brakes, and swerved the car, but not enough to avoid clipping the right flank of the deer. The tiny collision sent him swerving out of control, through the ditch on the opposite side of the road, and into the post of a lonely streetlight. The terrible screech of aluminum and glass being mutilated was deadened in Eric's ears, as though he were hearing it through several inches of damp cotton.

When it was all over and he ran the incident through his head, Eric found that his memory of the details was foggier than the air outside. He remembered the deer and cursed it. The one thing he could remember sharply was the image of the animal's eyes as he had seen them just seconds ago. They had been staring at him innocently, as though the deer had no idea of the mortal danger heading towards it at 63 miles-per-hour. The fact that his only mode of transportation was now demolished did not occur to Eric, nor did the fact that it was his father's vehicle faze him. All he could think was that deer – that stupid, fucking deer – had waited so patiently, apathetically, ignorantly for him to hit it. He whispered a prayer that the creature was still alive.

With some effort, he managed to open the door and get out of the car. He became dizzy as he stepped out into the cold, damp air. Something warm dripped into his eyes. Touching his forehead, he felt a large bump. He vaguely recalled now, that his head collided with the steering wheel as the car had collided with the streetlight. He trudged out onto the road.

On the opposite shoulder lay the deer. Eric tried to run, but mostly hobbled to its side. The quick heaves of its chest indicated it was still alive. He rolled the creature onto its other side and saw where the car had struck it. Two cracked ribs poked out through its bloodier fur.

The quick, labored breaths of the deer turned into sharp, guttural grunts within seconds of Eric's arrival. Without thinking about it, he remembered his father having left his hunting knife in the trunk after his trip last weekend. His father had wanted Eric to come with him on his trips ever since Eric was old enough to get his license, but the thought of killing an animal had always terrified Eric. Pity overcame terror, and Eric went to retrieve the knife.

He nearly passed out on his way back to the deer, and suspected he might have a concussion, but decided he would attend to that in a few minutes. He returned to the miserable animal. Bringing the knife to the deer's throat, Eric cursed it again for not dodging his car.

The knife was sharp, and it slid through the animal's trachea with ease. Blood spurted as the blade crossed the jugular, and it felt warm on Eric's hand. He became dizzy; for a moment, he had held the power of death in his hands. Eric stared at the knife as its crimson stain glistened in the moonlight. He pointed the blade directly beneath the animal's

sternum and slit down, as he had seen his father do once. As he did, the animal's abdomen split open, internal organs being freed onto the surface of the road. He dropped the knife and grabbed either side of the rib cage. With a grunt of effort, he pried it open far enough to see the deer's heart and lungs. Its lungs were moving very faintly, and the heart still pumped. With each beat, blood spurted from the wound at its neck. Then, all the movement stopped. Eric thought he heard a whisper as the deer's entire body went limp. He smelled the stench of the excrement it had spilled, and he nearly retched.

The animal's head caught his attention. Above the line where he had slit the deer's throat, everything was untouched. Perfect, as though nothing had happened to the creature at all. Eric stumbled to his feet and fought off a second, more powerful urge to retch. He plodded towards his car, forgetting his father's knife. The rut where the shoulder met the road caught his foot and he fell flat on his back. The wind was knocked from his lungs, and he lay there, wheezing. His dizziness returned a hundred-fold as he struggled for the energy to roll onto his side. As he did, he was met with the sight of the deer. Darkness began closing in around him. His peripheral vision was gone, and, as though they were being enshrouded, the rest of his surroundings slowly began fading out. His last sight was the head, less than three feet from his, its eyes staring at him – into him – reflecting the moonlight like two polished, black stones set in sand.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

heather herrmann-miller

Your hands,
like two ships,
simultaneously glide
across my body.
Fan out over
waves of pain.
Pull warmth
from my core,
slowly.
Cut through
dross,
expose jeweled
coral,
coax
heat.

marlene weir

SPRING FEVER

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

The sun lingers longer,
strokes pineal and pituitary places;
warming, warning
oviporous creatures:
the dance has begun.
Earth in its ellipse
abandons sphere for ovoid,
drawn toward the amorous moon.
Rhubarb's red nubs
are roused and reaching upward.
Pistils, stamens quiver
on each greening stem.

Within the woods
wild turkeys circle
wary hens,
fanning quaking feathers
in a thrump of compressed air.
Whitetails lick languidly
at each other's faces.
Geese, permanently paired,
echo plaintive cries
across the pond where
bullfrogs court
their knobby loves
in macho chorus.

I am aware,
as I make the clearing
and come upon you asleep
on the hill,
that the sun kisses
your closed lids,
breezes brush stray hair
across your brow,
and soft lips twitch
enticingly
in a sleep swirled and swollen
with damp murmurings
of Spring.

NAP TIME

SELECTION OF MERIT

sue hass

LONELY HOWL

george w. oliver iii

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

Upon a mountain of my own feelings
My weary eyes look to a shared moon and glow
The still of the night interrupted by a falling tear
Alone too long, my strong exterior masking an
aching soul
So far from where I feel my destiny lies
As it can control the tide, the moon I wish to pull
us closer
How can I communicate my request to this bright
sphere in the
darkest skies
Steadying myself, I arch my head back
A powerful cry erupts from this lone wolf's chest
The cool breeze no longer able to echo through a
hollow heart



SHE MOVED ME

SELECTION OF MERIT ESSAY

Desi was the only thing of importance that I brought with me when I moved to Michigan. My delicate Arabian gave me confidence. She was my beauty during awkward preteen years. While I was chunky and frizzy-haired, she was sleek and glamorous. People flocked to her like they would a movie star and smiled kindly while I described our fun times on the East Coast together. When her beauty was forgotten, the people stayed and became my friends. Desi and I were inseparable for nearly three years. I rode her every day. She was my partner for horse shows and mounted games. And then, one day, she was dead. A freak accident left her with a broken leg and me with a broken heart. Then, my search began. For two weeks, I pored over sale ads and visited nearby farms. No ads went unanswered, but none of the horses were fit to be my best friend. As a last resort, I decided to attend a local 4-H auction. I combed the aisles of stalls and found no sleek shining beasts, only thin ragged creatures whose hearts and spirits were broken. Those that might be appropriate were too young, too small, or too expensive. I was at a loss. I spied a large chestnut-colored horse getting off a nearby stock trailer, but I turned my nose in typical fifteen-year-old fashion. I hated chestnuts, and I would never own one.

Still, my father convinced me to look again and I was drawn to the big mare. Her coat was of the most brilliant red. She had a long narrow white blaze that flowed down her face like spilled paint. Two white stockings covered her dancing hind feet. She had a proud, intelligent eye. Her alert ears flicked back and forth, taking in all the sights and noise. I opened up my consignment book and found the mare's description. It read, "BAR DELLS GINGER, a k a Ginger. Three year old chestnut mare, Quarter Horse. Grand Champion Blue Water Futurity Halter, Yearling Mares; Reserve Champion Blue Water Circuit, Two Year Old Mares."

I knew that halter classes judged the animal's build and beauty and it was no surprise this mare had done well. Halter classes don't judge manners, however, and I was about to learn of Ginger's shocking flaw. As I leaned in to pat her, her ears went back and her eyes showed white. I drew my hand away and the mare lashed forward, striking out aggressively. "GINGER! Stop!" A voice cried in my ear. I turned quickly and saw a small, slim man. He introduced himself, smiling and said his name was Dave Mason, no relation to the musician. I half-smiled, still shaken by the mare's violent display. He quickly entered the stall and I was amazed to see the horse settle down immediately. He spoke in slow deliberate tones, and invited me in to see her. I stepped in cautiously, ready to jump back at any moment, but the mare came to me with her ears perked forward. I stroked her gently and shot a bewildered look at her owner. He quickly looked down, and explained that Ginger was still young, and did not like strangers. I nodded in understanding and decided I would ride her.

She stood like a lady while we readied her and walked quietly beside us to the arena. I stuck my foot in the stirrup and swung aboard. She was taller than Desi by nearly eight inches and I felt that I was on top of the world. She swung out confidently into a walk and paraded around the ring. She wore no bit in her mouth, just a bosal, which is a device that

puts pressure on the bridge of a horse's nose. Bosals are generally used on young horses and I had never ridden on one before. I had also never ridden a horse as young as Ginger before and I was quite nervous. Ginger responded to a light touch, however, and I soon had her working through her gaits with confidence.

I could tell Dave was pleased and he confided to my dad that I had quiet hands and a strong, natural leg. By the time I got off Ginger, I knew I'd found my new horse. In truth though, the horse had found me. I later learned that she had offended nearly all the prospective buyers with her bad manners. One woman liked her so much that she brought her trailer when she came to look at her. After the money had changed hands, Ginger refused to load on her trailer. The woman had taken back her money and left in disgust. No one ever really knew why she had behaved so well for me that day. Perhaps Ginger was as particular about her owners as I was about my horses. For a long time, I had figured that it was good fortune that had allowed me to get a horse like her for so little money. Her bloodlines were spectacular, boasting several World Champion stallions and racehorses. Her lines could also be traced back to several foundation stallions. As time went on, I began to realize that I got Ginger because no one else wanted her. Her kicking and biting was habitual and her attitude was terrible. But, when the gavel fell, Ginger was mine. Lucky, lucky me...

"Watch out, she kicks!" This was my mantra at my first show with Ginger. She pranced around the ring with her hindquarters off the wall, her hooves flashing the moment anyone dared get close. She wore red ribbons in her forelock and tail, a warning for horses that bite or kick. I could not believe that this was the horse that could stand like a saint during halter classes and parade off with blue ribbons and trophies, but came unglued during riding classes. Still, she was young and I knew she would require time and patience. Fortunately for her, I was long on both those qualities.

It wasn't all bad times, though. She was a quick learner and enjoyed being ridden. She worked her heart out for me and often learned a maneuver in just one session. Her ground manners improved in time with firm handling. Soon she lost that maniacal edge from her eye. At our third horse show together, Ginger took third place out of a field of eighteen exhibitors. What delighted me more than that however, was that Ginger showed for the first time minus her warning ribbons! We were on our way. Ginger and I had developed a great partnership and I was flying high. The horse that nobody would give a chance was excelling at shows. We did not know that tragedy would soon strike and test us both.

My mother was a very sick woman. She had seen Ginger only three times in the three months since I had bought her. Wegner's Disease had struck her down for nearly nine months. Her heart and lungs were weakened but it was her kidneys that suffered the most. They were ninety-nine percent failed and she required dialysis three times a week. The dialysis wore down her blood and unbalanced her body. Her joints would often lock up and she would scream in pain. I would soak washcloths in hot water and place them on her swollen knees and elbows. I would hold her hand and tell her she would be better soon. I described Ginger's training to her so she could imagine what it was like to ride a

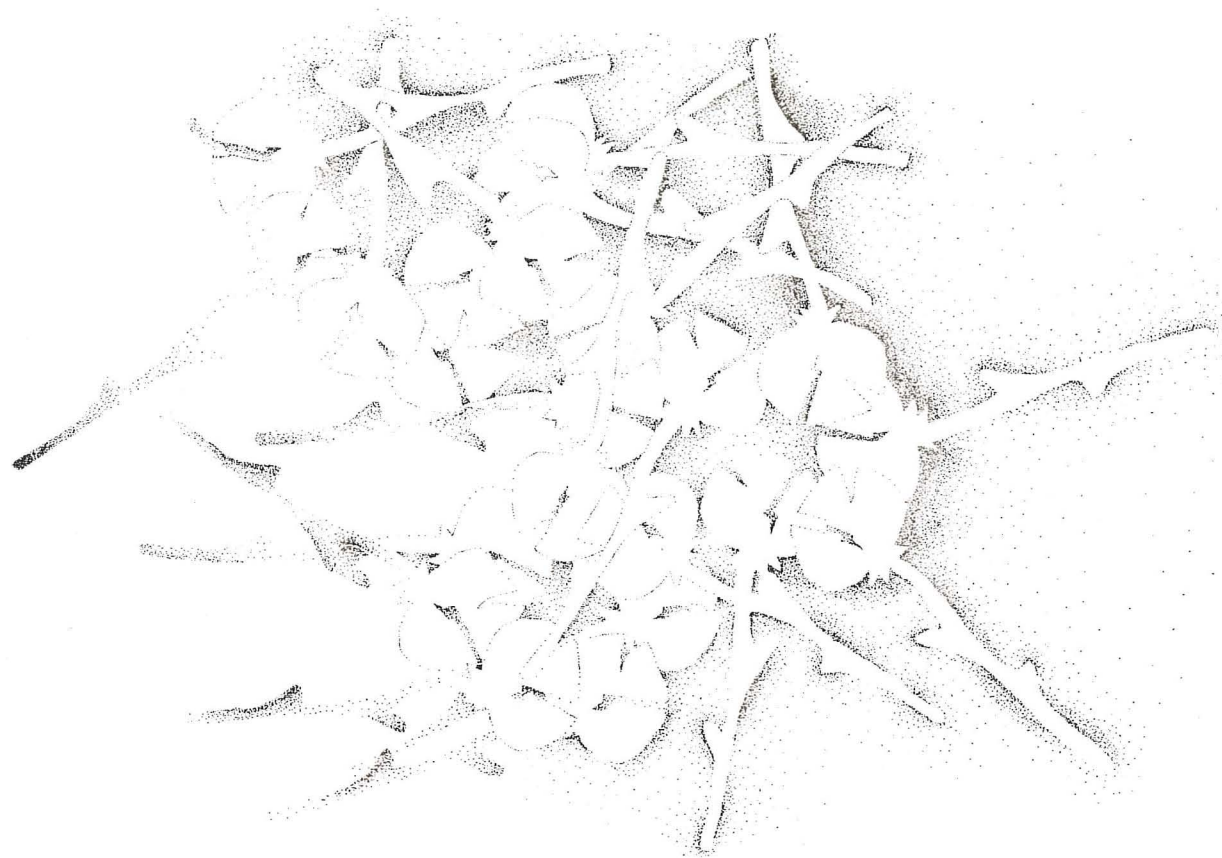
horse one more time. When my dad got home, he would take over my mom's care and I would get a ride to the barn with one of my brothers or a friend. I would escape with Ginger and we would fly over the fields with the speed of a thousand birds. On really bad days, I would school in the arena because the constant repetition of a maneuver would take my mind off my home life. I couldn't wait until my mother was better and could watch me ride again. Ginger never asked how my mother was doing. She never made me think of the obvious answer which was, of course, worse. Ginger stood silent and let me lead the conversation in whatever direction I chose. That's what I loved about her, her silence. Even when my temper overflowed and I struck out at her for no reason, she stood like a house, and reprimanded me with a silent, confused stare. I would cling to Ginger and tell her I was sorry, although not really sure what for, and think of how it would be when my mother got better.

My mom died a few weeks later. I do not remember her funeral or most of the wake. I remember only the feeling I had, like I was a stone. The days after passed in a haze of denial and I'm not sure how long it was until I saw Ginger again. The barn was no longer a safe haven – everyone who saw me said they were sorry or worse yet, pitied me with their eyes. I took Ginger on trail rides nearly everyday, an activity that she hates even today. Yet during those times she walked quietly alone on wooded paths or gravel roads. The summer passed in a blur. I rode in several more shows, but there was no joy in it. My mom would never see me show my horse again. It just didn't matter anymore. Nothing seemed to matter.

But I had to keep going. It was important that Ginger became the best she could be, and I continued to train her everyday. I trained long and hard; often more intense and abusive than I should have been. My anger about my mother flowed into my reins during every training session. Ginger's gentle rubber bit was replaced with a harsh twisted wire steel bit. I made excuses for this, claiming my best friend Heather did it. Heather always won and I suppose that's why no one stopped me. I used a pulley-like device, known as draw reins, to yank her head into proper position. Still, she suffered in silence, and never fought me. One day, I walked towards her with my bridle and began to slip it over her head. I looked into her eyes, which had become flat and pained. In them I saw my mother's eyes and I stepped back. I removed the wire bit and placed it in my tack trunk. It hangs in my bedroom today, as a reminder to never lose my patience. I picked up her rubber bit and slid it in her mouth. I took her draw reins and placed them in a box, vowing not to use them until I could do so properly. I rode that day with a renewed joy. As days turned to weeks, and weeks to months, and months to years, my joy grew. Life continues for us all. I realize now that my mother did get better. She is with Desi and she is well. People often ask me how I can exhibit my horse with such humor and happiness, even when I am not placing or riding well. I do nothing but smile, because they could never understand my secret. You see, my mother watches every horse show I ride in and I can feel her smile down on me every time, whether I win or lose. And that is what is important.

BAD RECEPTION
SELECTION OF MERIT

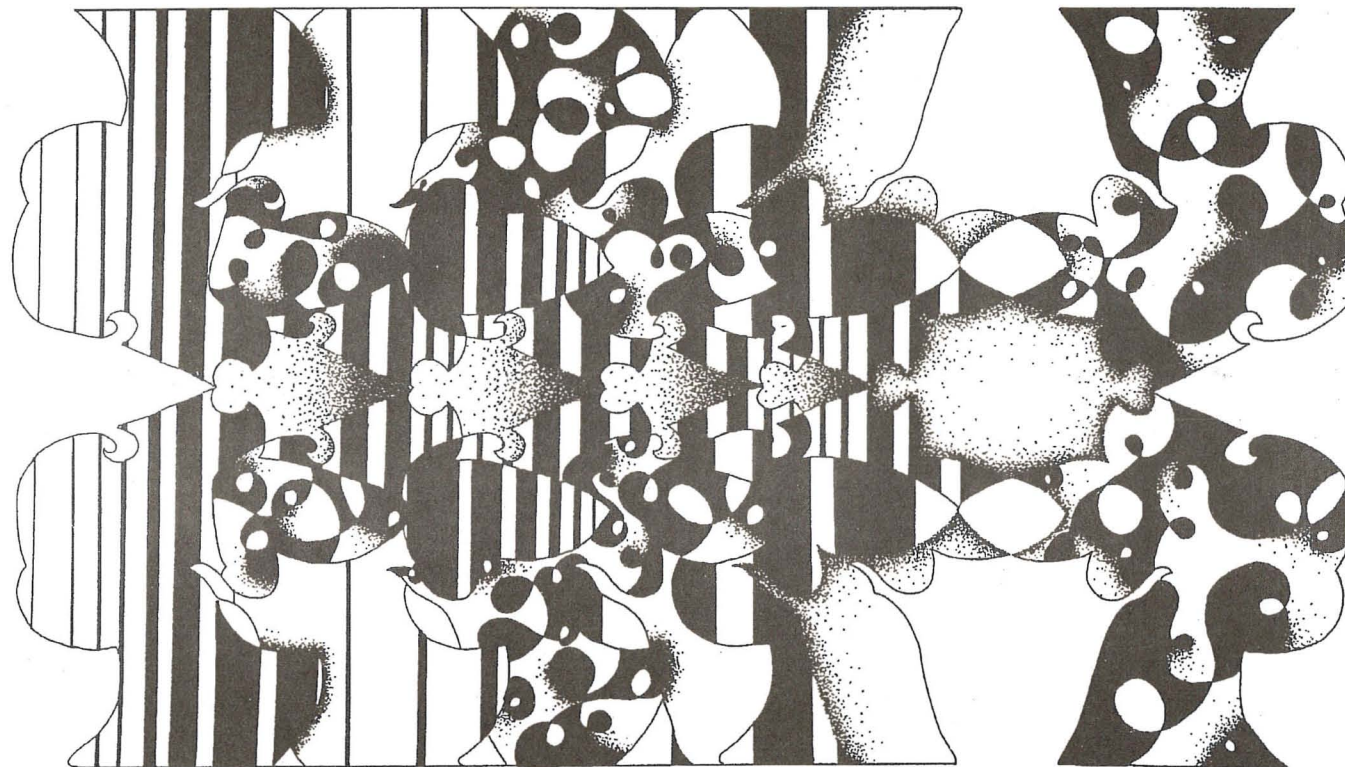
leah raymo



tina aston

PIECED TOGETHER

SELECTION OF MERIT



FROM THE WINDOW

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

norah lynn gaglio

From the window I watch you,
bat on your shoulder,
dusty white sneakers
planted in the grass
in an almost perfect stance.

The hot water runs
over my hands
and bubbles foam
over the dirty dishes
in the sink.
You practice your swing
once, twice.

You tap the bat
on the piece of particle board
used for home plate,
straighten your hat
and nod your head.

Suds creep over the sink,
I turn the water off
and dry my hands.
The pitcher winds up
and throws the ball.

Squinting in the sun,
you swing too soon.
Strike one, you shake it off.
Strike two, your body stiffens.

Your last swing,
your teeth clench and knuckles whiten.
In the silence of the kitchen
I chant
Swing, swing, swing
And you do.
I hear the crack when the ball hits the metal bat.

Your eyes wide,
as you watch the ball
soar over the pitcher's head.
Straining their necks,
the other players watch the ball fly.

Through the open window,
I hear the right fielder shout
"got it"
as he clasps his hand
Over the well-worn glove.

You stop short of first base.
Head down, you walk back
your brother and the boys
slap you high fives.

You sit back on the grass
Take off your hat
smooth your ponytail.
Lips curving back into a smile,
you look up at the window.

I wink
and go back
to a sink full of dirty dishes.

marlene weir

BILLIE

SELECTION OF MERIT SHORT STORY

DELIVERANCE

amanda cutler

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

The tears came and your smile
could not stop them.
God seemed so far, but
your hands
took mine and mapped the way.
Before his throne –
my only offering – uncertainty.
Your tongue carved the feeling,
the dead silence in my heart, the loss of faith and
hope, but love...
Your translation...
And God rested his hand upon your shoulder.
Father,
son and
while angels fell
like fire around us,
He delivered me.

Billie's house stood at the edge of a dusty alley, where dusty children rode dusty bicycles up and down in the summer heat, enveloped in gray clouds kicked up by their furious pedaling. The old clapboard house, bright blue despite the dust, commanded attention as it guarded the corner lot. Billie herself, in a faded blue dress, commanded attention as she stood in the gateway, framed by a tenacious, lush wisteria vine, which dutifully provided her with a bit of shade. Dust dared not settle on Billie, nor on her tangle of tomatoes, morning glories, sweet peppers and snow-on-the-mountain. The rusted wire fence along the alley leaned outward with the weight of age and summer bounty. Billie, hair white as a halo, stood erect.

"Y'all look awfully pretty in that sundress," she called to me, in the slow southern accent she had carried with her to the north. "Nice and cool." Her soft voice carried clearly across the stretch of alley between our back porches. She waved a slender hand, refined in spite of age spots, in more of a shooing motion than a greeting. Then she turned toward her garden just off her back steps, and reached for the neatly coiled garden hose.

"Don't go no farther than Billie's house!" the children shouted to each other as they barreled down the alley like a retreating army. "Turn around there!" The cloud thickened at the corner where the bicycles converged and clattered about, then broke through the cloud again bearing the flushed, sweaty faces of the children - eyes wild as a herd of ponies.

Billie moved deliberately, calmly spraying down the leaves, removing any signs of dust and commotion from her thirsty plot. The plants responded by growing thick as a jungle in the little garden.

"Billie!" One high pitched squeal rose above the others. "Squirt us with the hose!"

Billie turned slowly in their direction, cocking her head to one side as a look of recollection swept her face and lit her eyes. At once a fine spray leapt into the air, clearing the wisteria and arching up, up over the alley, over the dust and dreariness on the other side of the fence. The relentless sunlight hit the spray and diffused it into brilliant colored bits, arching the alleyway with color and magic.

"A rainbow, a rainbow!" The children shouted as if Billie had invented the thing herself.

"Yes, yes. You all go on under, go on." she said. And she held the misty arch aloft until the last child had cleared it.

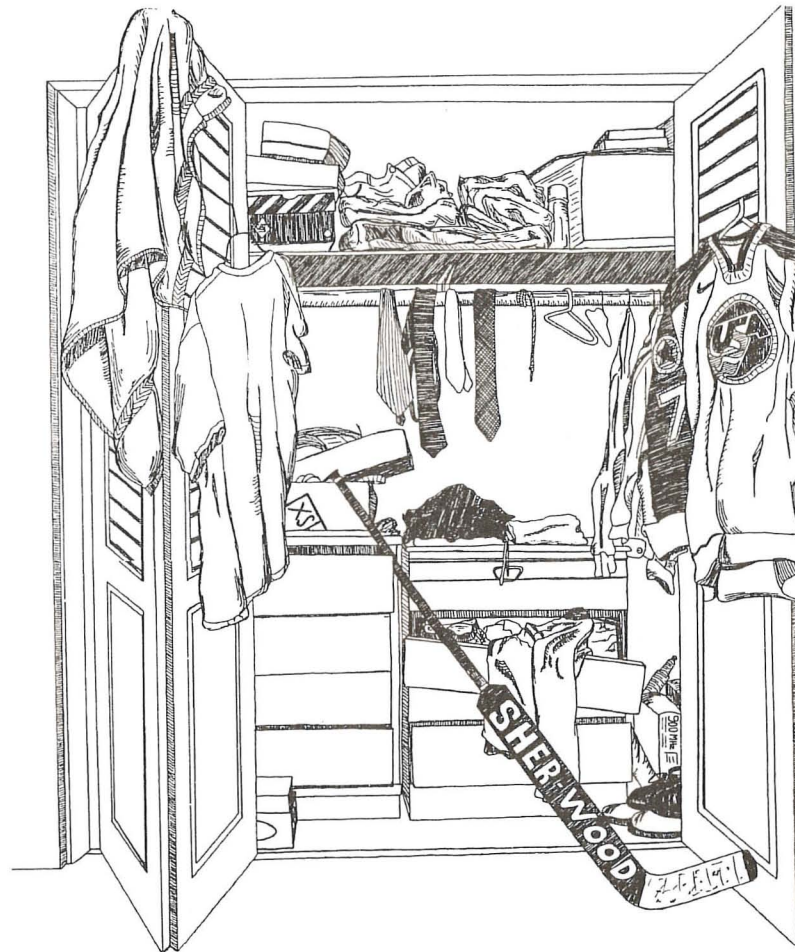
I stood transfixed on my back porch, watching through a wilting rose bush that I had coaxed into a heart shape on the lattice. Billie turned her calm gaze upon me, surveying the sad state of my botanical efforts. She held the hose reverently as if it were the River of Life itself. How often I had heard the reassuring sound, late in the evening, of that spray pattering softly against damp earth and thirsty leaves. I felt she could have summoned the very Jordan River if it were necessary to keep her corner of earth alive with hope.

Her dove-like hand fluttered toward my rosebush and struggling spearmint as if in benediction. "Y'all can borrow my waterin' hose any time, honey."

CLOSET DRAWING

SELECTION OF MERIT

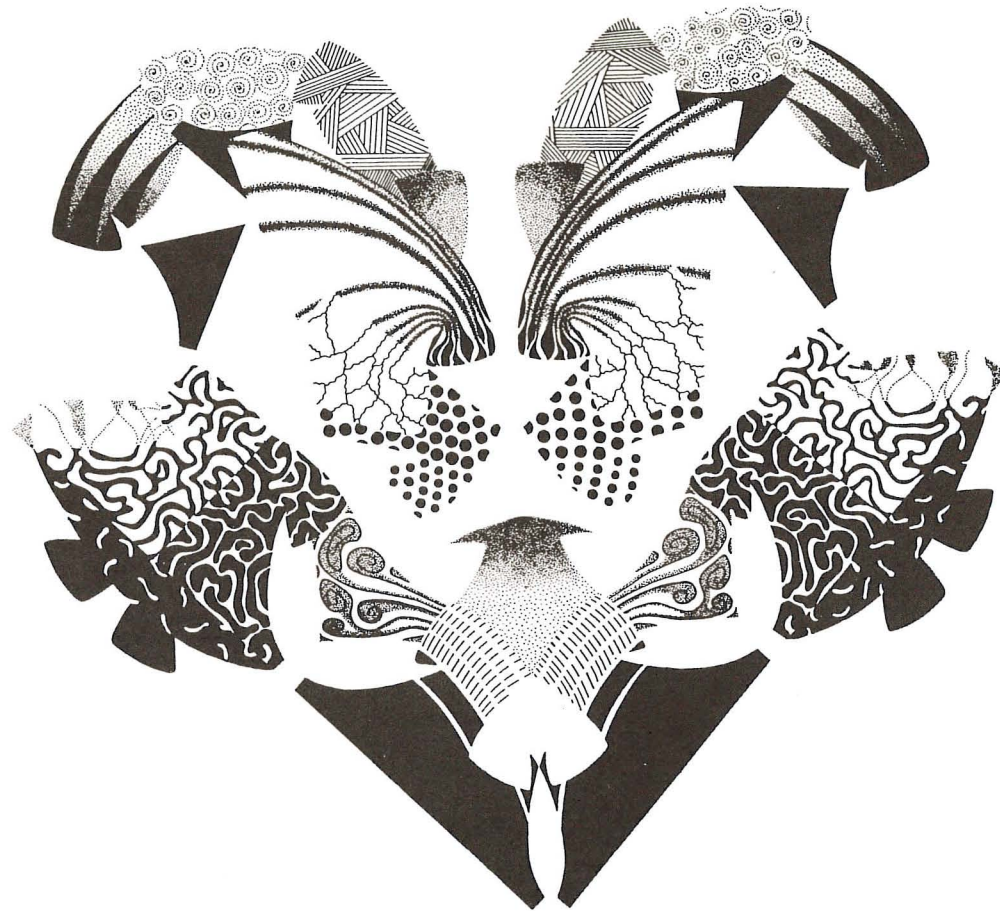
nathan denryter



richelle jurk

YOUR HEART

SELECTION OF MERIT



TELLING A BLUFF

SELECTION OF MERIT ESSAY

megan schwedler

"Heart of my heart, how I love that melody," sang Papa from the driver's seat of his white Buick Regal, as we crept down Bluff Road. We were pointing out the purple fences and yellow grass that we claimed to see. This was our favorite song to sing on our favorite road to drive, though we could never remember the second verse.

Trips down Bluff Road with Nana and Papa were my fondest childhood memories because they brought together so many of the things I loved. Not many people have had the privilege of saying that they accompanied us on a "Bluff Road Trip," because we only took people that we thought were special enough to play along with us.

Bluff Road was a dead-end dirt road in Grindstone City. From the time I was about seven until the time that I was eleven, I must have made a hundred trips down that dead-end path through the woods. There were small summer cottages between minute patches of woods on either side of the road. The total length was only about a half a mile, or at least that is where Papa turned around. The half-mile drive took us quite a while, however, when we only drove a maximum of five miles an hour.

There were certain unwritten rules that accompanied a "Bluff Road Trip." Nana, Papa, and I, together with the lucky few who occasionally accompanied us, would drive to Grindstone City as we sang songs from my grandparents' childhood. Once we got to Grindstone, we would pull up in Papa's "designated" parking spot in front of the Grindstone General Store, and Papa would treat us to ice cream cones that were as big as my head, or so I thought. As we climbed back into the car, we all knew that it was time for a trip down Bluff Road.

The first rule for Bluff Road was that while we were driving on it, everything that came out of our mouths had to be a lie, a "bluff." As we turned the corner onto the "Liar's Lane" that stretched out before us, Nana would say, "What a lovely green house," when the house was really white. I would answer with, "That's nice, but I don't really think that it matches the purple fence in the front yard." There was really no fence at all. Most of these comments were followed by fits of giggles from the other parties in the car.

Another unspoken rule for the trips was that Papa and Nana always had to disagree. If Nana would comment on how she loved a certain type of flower, Papa's immediate reaction was that he hated it, even though we knew he loved it too. If Papa hated it when it rained, Nana would declare that she loved it. They never really disagreed with each other, they just wanted to make me smile, and it worked every time.

Songs, ice cream, my grandparents, and laughter, four of my absolute favorite things in the whole world were all included in our trips down Bluff Road. Even though we will never be able to physically recreate those moments again, as Papa is no longer with us, I can see them in my mind over and over, whenever I want. When I come across that road in passing, I always tell a little white lie, in memory of our fun down Bluff Road.

THE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

SELECTION OF MERIT ESSAY

The year is 1999 and the new millennium is just around the corner. You are on a shopping trip in a huge, glitzy megamall. Everywhere you look, you are surrounded by eye-popping, attention-grabbing displays of the latest clothes and most modern wares. Flashy windows, abstract mannequins and gleaming lights all scream for your attention. Suddenly, like an oasis of calm in the middle of a sea of turmoil, you are drawn to a quiet little shop where the frantic pace of life slows down; tempting aromas beckon you in and you feel as though you have stepped into a small country store. Welcome to Bath and Body Works!

Entering the store under the pleasing red and white gingham awning is like taking a journey back in time. Scents of apples, vanilla and dried flowers are reminiscent of Grandma's house. Smiling clerks in gingham shop aprons are ready to assist you and the wood patterned floor seems to encourage you to step right on in. Shining chrome and glass displays? Not in this homey little place. Pretty soaps and sponges and shampoos are arranged in wooden "bushel" baskets. Knotty pine shelves topped with quaint cotton doilies hold perfumes and skin-care products. Painted rustic cabinets act as floor displays for a wide variety of scented candles, potpourri and aroma therapy products. There is even a tile-topped vanity, complete with sink, to hold hand soaps with such appealing names as Cucumber-Melon and Daffodil Fields.

But above all the tidy barrels and crates and below the strategically placed track-lighting wafts another reason for coming in, an enticing cloud of fragrances. Some are familiar and well-loved. Others are exotic and call for closer inspection. But the mingling of the scents draws you in and invites you to linger to sample each one.

Americans have long been obsessed with the idea that we should smell like anything except human beings. We want to smell "natural," like fruits and berries, herbs and flowers. Bath and Body Works very cleverly exploits this desire by offering dozens of different scented products for us to choose from. Yet not merely content with selling lovely fragrances, the folks at Bath and Body Works are also selling us an image. An image of small town, pre-World War II America when life was simple and needs were few. An image of innocence and honesty and optimism. We are being sold the myth that buying artificially manufactured perfumes out of baskets and barrels will in some way take us back to those days of purity and cleanliness. The interesting paradox of this strategy, however, is that the reality of the "good old days" falls far short of the image that is being created for us.

In the 1930' and 40's the standard of cleanliness in American culture was a once-a-week bath with Ivory Soap taken in a wash tub near the stove. For much of rural America, indoor plumbing was still a distant dream. Sanitation systems in large cities were still primitive and trips to the outhouse were just a normal part of life. Even as recently as the 1960's the traditional Saturday evening bath and hair wash was good enough to meet society's standards of personal hygiene. But somewhere along the line simply being clean was no longer enough. We had to *smell* fresh and clean in order to be perceived that way. But who decides what "clean and fresh" actually smells like? And how can we reconcile today's idea of cleanliness with the reality of the times Bath and Body Works is trying to evoke?

In today's culture where no cost is too great to get and keep a product in the public's eye, marketers and manufacturers have taken on the responsibility of setting new standards of cleanliness. The reason for this is simple enough. In our consumer-driven economy the way to get more customers is to create more products for them to buy. And the way to get consumers to buy these new products is to appeal to their need to be seen as acceptable and desirable by society. Savvy marketers have made an art form of this practice and Bath and Body Works has happily jumped on the bandwagon with the very clever gimmick of evoking the past.

Back in the mid-nineteen seventies there was a television commercial for a product called Gee, Your Hair Smells Terrific! It was a new shampoo that would make your hair literally "smell terrific." In the commercial a high school girl despairs over ever getting the cute boy who sits behind her in class to notice her. But just one use of this heavenly smelling shampoo does the trick. The boy suddenly notices the wonderful aroma emanating from this young lady's hair, taps her on the shoulder and murmurs those magic words, "Gee, your hair smells terrific!" The clear implication is that if you smell this good, you will get the boy of your dreams. But not because your hair is clean or shiny or healthy-looking. Nowhere in the ad is it even mentioned that Gee, Your Hair Smells Terrific! will get your hair clean. The real difference is in how good your hair will smell!

Since that time, advertisers have focused not on the health benefits of personal hygiene, but on the personal benefits of smelling "rainbow fresh." Thanks to the advertising business it is no longer good enough to just brush your teeth. Now you must be "minty fresh, not mediciney."

Women are welcome to use Irish Spring Deodorant Soap as long as they enjoy that "manly" smell. We scent ourselves to imply that we are mysterious or outdoorsy or innocent. We scent our homes to imply that we have spent the day baking or carrying armloads of fresh flowers in from the garden. We scent our laundry to give the impression that our clothes have been hung out to dry in a pure country breeze. In others words, the fragrances we use help us to maintain the image that their manufacturers create for us.

Bath and Body Works marketing strategy convinces us that by purchasing their products we, too, can have the best of both worlds. By purchasing our favorite scented soaps and lotions in such a warm friendly store, we can recapture that feeling of innocence and safety that we all long for, while at the same time feeling that we smell good enough to be considered attractive and acceptable in today's society. We can go back to a kinder, simpler time when it was o.k. to stop and smell the roses. Or at least the rose scented, antibacterial hand soap in the convenient pump bottle.

AFTER THIS renee schantz

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

Reconstructed, the pieces of him
fit like a cheap puzzle
displaying an old man
boxed in by a casket
Although the pictures clutched
in his heavy fists
told another story

The story of a young man
pained with a certain knowledge –
as if he had read
the last page before
finishing the book

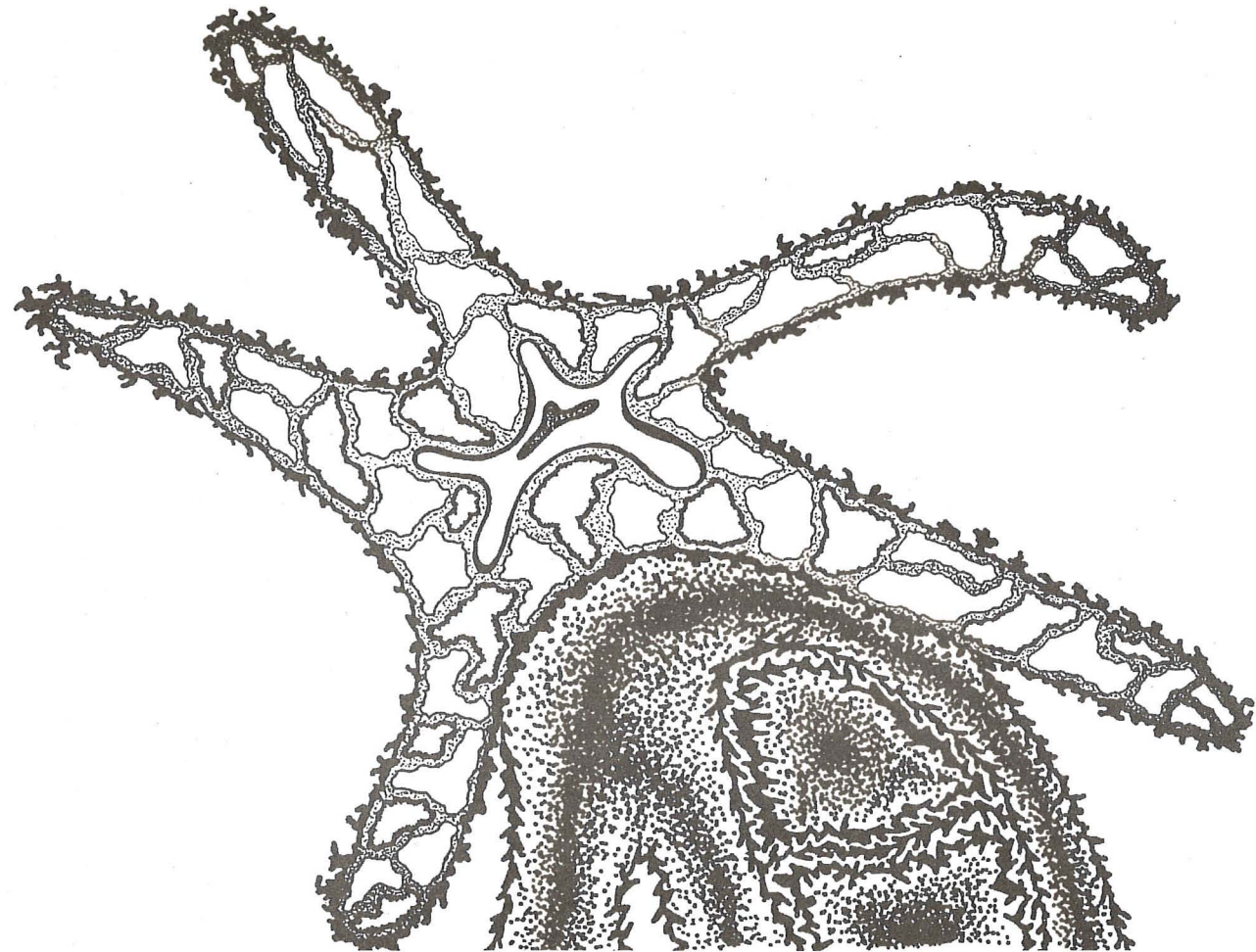
His eyes told that he knew,
even then—
as his strong hands rested on his children –
that it wouldn't be long
before his touch
wasn't familiar any more
and that the day would come when
his sounds would lie dormant
while their ears would
strain for his voice

Stung by this thought
he still knew
it wouldn't be long
before the pieces of him
they need most
lay scattered on the highway

mary schoen

STAR STRUCK

SELECTION OF MERIT



ALL ON A MONDAY

SELECTION OF MERIT SHORT STORY

norah lynn gaglio

Dressed in running shoes and sweats on my way to the health club, I waited in the line of cars entering the middle school parking lot. Bette Midler's throaty voice belted out of the speakers.

My twelve-year-old son said, "Please, Mom, at least turn it down in the parking lot, so my friends won't hear."

I turned up the volume, rolled down the windows and started singing, "one more round girls. Let the boy scouts hear you."

Not amused, my son pushed the mute button as we drove into the congested parking lot. I waved at the mom in the hunter green Volvo in front of us. She wore her robe and had a turban of terrycloth wrapped tightly around her bottle-blond hair. She waved her Virginia Slim out the window.

Grinning, I said to my son, "See, it could be worse."

Returning the smile, he said "sure, Mom" and left the car to join the students that were gathered at the entrance of the building. I pulled out of the parking lot, pressed the mute button again and sang along with Bette while I drove to the health club.

I circled yet another parking lot and decided that it was quicker to park at the restaurant next door. I hoped that the treadmills were not taken, along with all of the parking spots. I grabbed a towel from the front desk and settled on a treadmill near the back of the room. Fifteen minutes into my run, beads of sweat collecting on my face and running down my back, the mom from the green Volvo got on the treadmill next to mine. No longer was she in her robe and turban, but in a wine-colored silk running suit, blond hair styled and plastered with hair spray. Her face looked like she just walked away from the Estee Lauder counter at Hudson's. She started walking, never breaking a sweat. Then she felt the need to interrupt my workout.

"Did you hear about Maggie Shaw having an affair with her son's eighth grade science teacher?"

"Hmm," I said, thinking to myself that she should mind her own business.

"Her husband found them after school having coffee in his office."

I just kept nodding and accelerated. I cut my workout short and headed to the showers.

I pulled the minivan into the garage, entered the side door and locked myself in the house. I made the beds, picked up the dirty clothes and threw a load of whites in the washer. I ran the water in the sink to do the breakfast dishes and looked out the window. Across the street a toddler and her mother splashed in the newly formed puddles. I remembered

the times I would have left the dishes and beds to go for a walk and splash in the puddles. There was a time I would have told the bitch on the treadmill to get screwed, mind her own business and do a real workout. Somehow my life was lost among the dinner parties, cupcakes, spelling words, mortgage payments, soccer practices and flute lessons. Sex had even turned into a Saturday evening routine.

I left the cereal bowls piled in the sink, poured myself a cup of coffee and went into the office area of the house. I sat at the desk, curled my toes over the surge protector and felt for the on button. I clicked it on and the familiar hum of the computer filled the room. As I waited for the icons to cover the screen, I put a Michael Franks CD in the stereo and grabbed the checkbook to enter the recent checks in the ledger on Microsoft Money. The mellow voice of Michael Franks sang "The Lady Wants To Know" in the background. My palm covered the mouse; I guided it past the checkbook icon and clicked on the Internet instead. I remembered seeing a web site in the paper to check out the *New York Times* book reviews. I wanted to see how the new Wally Lamb book, *I Know This Much Is True*, was doing. The computer dialed, rang and connected me to this unfamiliar world of websites. Not really sure what to do, I started exploring. First, searched sites about literature. I read some book reviews, and checked out the Barnes and Noble site, ordering the new Anne Tyler book. While I searched, I came across a chat registration. Without thinking, I double-clicked and answered all of the questions that popped up on the screen. Before I knew it, I was registered, had an ID, password and a fictitious profile. I was Popsicletoes32, a 32-year-old bisexual woman whose hobbies were belly dancing, yoga and the occasional lesbian relationship. What had possessed me to do this, I do not know. The thought of being someone else for awhile, someone so different, started to excite me.

I checked out the chat rooms. I started with the Thirties Love Room. I sat back for awhile, sipped my coffee and watched the conversations roll across the screen. Entranced by what I was reading, I was startled by a window popping up on my monitor. In the window JoJo39 wrote " Popsicletoes32, interesting name, tell me about your belly dancing adventures."

I started writing. " I'm a belly dancer at a Middle Eastern restaurant in the city. While the guests are eating dinner we dance from table to table. What do you do?"

"I'm an emergency room nurse at city hospital. I work the midnight shift. It gets pretty exciting in there too. Your profile says that you are into yoga. Tell me about that."

Having taken a yoga class at the community college I was able to sound somewhat knowledgeable on the subject. "I teach two yoga classes a week at the local gym. The yoga keeps me in shape for the dancing."

"I bet that you are in great shape and really limber. What positions are your favorite?"

We talked in the private room for over an hour. I had no idea where the lies were coming from. My fingers just kept

clicking over the keyboard like they were possessed. By the end of the conversation I had almost convinced myself that I was Popsicletoes32. The clock on the bottom of the screen read 2:10. The minivan needed to be in the elementary school parking lot at 2:30. I had promised JoJo that I would be online the next day at the same time and we could rendezvous again. I logged out and turned off the computer. Before I left to pick up the kids, I checked the voicemail messages. Coming through the phone line was the voice of my husband asking me to pick up his dry cleaning. The second message was Mary, from the orthodontist, with a reminder call for Jason's appointment. Sighing, I placed the receiver back on the phone and grabbed my keys.

I pulled the van into yet another parking lot. Jessica and Johnny threw their backpacks into the back and fought over the front seat. Compromising, Jessica got in the back for the first two stops. Switching, Johnny got in back and we left the post office on our way to the dry cleaners. After that we ran to the middle school to pick up Jason. Then we headed for home to get a snack and to pick up Jessica's flute to take to her lessons.

I left the boys at home and dropped Jessica off and grabbed some milk from the party store. At 4:30 it was time to pick Jessica up and get home to make dinner. I threw some pasta in a pot of boiling water and thawed out some sauce. The kids and I sat at the dining room table to do their homework. At 5:30 I cleared the books, pencils, paper and pretzel crumbs off the table, so I could turn around and set it with plates, forks, napkins, cups and condiments. My husband, Jake, had a late meeting so we ate alone. After dinner, the kids and I all cuddled in my bed to read some stories. While Jason took a turn reading I fell asleep. I woke up and untangled from the mass of little arms and legs to get out of bed. I carried Johnny down the hall to his bed. Then woke Jess and Jason to go into their rooms.

At 11:30 I checked the living room to see if Jake had made it home yet. He was engrossed in the Monday Night Football highlights. I said hi as I walked past and went into the office area. I flipped the on switch of the surge protector for the second time that day. I waited for the computer to boot up I found the Cher CD and put it in the stereo. I locked the office door, sat down at the desk and clicked the mouse on the Internet. I decided to visit a different chat room, The Married but Flirting room. I also decided to change my profile. I was still Popsicletoes32, but this time I was a young non-working mother with an infant, whose husband was in construction. I chatted with jock22 who had been married less than a year. His wife was pregnant and not interested in sex anymore. I had become a sad, lonely, housewife whose husband worked too much and neglected her sexually. In the midst of my conversation, the living room lights went out and the TV turned off.

A "good night" from Jake trailed off down the hall.

"Are you still there?" came across the screen.

"Yeah, I'm still here. I thought that my husband was coming, sorry. Where were we?"

LOVE WAS BLIND leah zoran

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

As I lay there,
Searching
I finally saw a glimpse of who he was
Who he had been –
This whole time.

I'd never seen him in
This light before –
So uncomplimentary.

A stumble into bad lighting
Was like ten steps backward –
A series of things I cannot change,
A series of mistakes.
But it was too dark to see,
Until we stumbled together.

If I could take it all back –
Steal little precious hours from my days.
My life could be so perfect,
My tears would be unwept,
My mistakes -- so invisible.

I'll try to put all of this out of my mind.
But what you've said –
Can never be unsaid.

I glanced at the family photo that covered the personalized mouse pad. I flipped it over and made a mental note to myself to turn it back when I was through. I returned to the conversation in front of me. He asked what I was wearing and I proceeded to give him a detailed description of a black silk teddy that was folded in my dresser drawer. The clock at the bottom of the screen read 12:45. I told Jock22 that I needed to get to bed and maybe we would meet again online sometime.

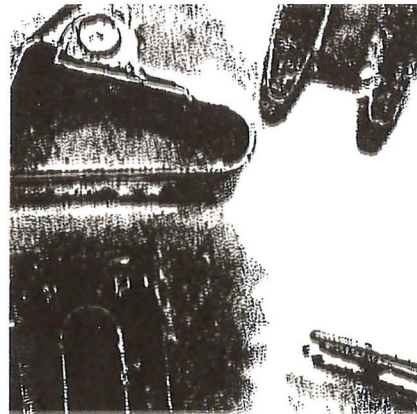
Shocked at how much time had passed, I clicked off the computer, turned out the lights, and climbed the stairs to get ready for bed. In the bathroom, I ran the warm water over my hands and washed my face. With soft strokes, I brushed my hair; I brushed my teeth and rinsed with mouthwash.

In the bedroom, I lit a single candle, dabbed Estee Lauder's Beautiful on my chest and in the dark I felt through my dresser drawer to find the black silk teddy. Slipping it on I slid into bed and woke my husband on a Monday night.

richelle jurk

VALUED ROLLER CLIPS

SELECTION OF MERIT



PLURAL POSSESSIVE

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

marlene weir

Your things and mine,
scattered over the floor
in wanton array,
signal a new
arrangement.
What is this new thing
we have begun?
Will our baggage
intertwine endearingly
until
we no longer recall
a time without the other?
What will your
dearest possessions
say to mine
when they are alone?

Will your underwear
whisper to mine
in the depths
of dark drawers
where we cannot see?
Will we return to
find evidence
of convergence
and conversation,
an invitation
to a dance
we have not witnessed?
Will odds and ends
make amends
when our backs are turned,
planning for the future
they will share,
thereby assuring
our own coexistence?
Is this a conspiracy of
material needs,
intended to safeguard
our union?
If such be the case
we stand a chance.
Our cumulative past
convenes to choreograph
our dance.

DEPARTURE marlene weir

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

This time
I promise not to pout,
or cling childishly
at your side as if
I could draw you into me
by sheer wilfulness alone.
No - I cannot stop the force
that takes you from me
this time.
Instead I'll concentrate
on the feel of your mustache
talking to my cheek,
aware that you are glancing
over my right shoulder
at an approaching conductor,
anticipating the arrangement
of baggage
and the effect of dragging heels
on velocity
and arrival time.
I will not play at
Kareninesque display.
The cord between our hearts
will snap soon enough
and you will hurtle West
without me.
This time, please,
look out the last dark window
if just to see a forced, brave smile.
Only when your captive face disappears
down the track, will I turn,
shoulders back, to face a world
drawn out in empty
timeless
miles.

TRANSFER ANXIETY

SELECTION OF MERIT ESSAY

Remember how being an eighth grader was so great? But then at the end of the year came the dread of being on the bottom again. I am experiencing that dread.

This past weekend, I visited Central Michigan University to attend a football game (which they lost), walk the campus, and get to know the town.

I plan on attending Central next semester – transferring into the Journalism department. Being the endless procrastinator that I am, this was my first visit to the university. I felt like a new freshman in a huge high school.

Everything has become so comfortable and easy here at SC4. I know people, and people know me. Two of my best friends are in the newspaper office with me, and I've developed relationships with some of my professors.

Although I love it here at SC4 and I will miss the people that I enjoy so much, I had come to the conclusion that it is time for me to move on. I can't stay here forever and I know that something more waits for me.

I had become restless to go away to school.

This weekend instilled in me a fear that I didn't know I was capable of. New people, new surroundings, new experiences – these are things that I look forward to and shy away from all at once.

I am no longer restless to go away to school.

I looked around at the football game and felt like one in a crowd of many that simply blended in – I was. There were so many people – especially in comparison to the small number of people at SC4.

I looked around campus and saw too much pavement, too much concrete, too little grass. I saw too many people grouped together in one place.

I felt like a mere herd animal with no earth to graze on.

I do realize that these are normal reactions to moving away, especially to a bigger school, but that doesn't do much in the comfort category.

I do realize that once I make emotional and intellectual connections with people at CMU, it will become easy and comfortable once again. I will no longer view the campus as buildings, the students as clones. I will be able to look through the crowd and recognize a friend.

But all these assurances do not make it any easier to leave the old for the new. It requires starting all over again. It requires leaving the comfort that I find in familiarity and the connections that are so conveniently accessible.

All of these things leave me unsettled, and wistful for more time with the people I enjoy so much – making me realize that education is as much the people as it is the books.

IN THE JEANS

SELECTION OF MERIT

vicky eddins



"I am not an anal person," I told the attendant. She had just reported to me that their espresso machine was broken and there would be no espresso until after 12:00 p.m. that day. I informed her that I needed a double espresso – that it was an integral part of my daily routine, yet she just looked at me as though I was an eccentric perfectionist. I'm not eccentric, but my father always taught me the importance of routine. He used to get up at the same time each day, shower, shave, and put on his English Leather Cologne. As for me, I've been drinking a double espresso within the fifteen-minute window between 7:45 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. every weekday since I was nineteen years old. There was only one exception in the last 12 years, 2 months, 3 weeks, and 6 days.

That exception came on January 1st, 1987. I was in college, but still living with my parents. I had gotten tipsy at a New Year's Eve party – a mistake I have not repeated since – and had an accident driving home. My father did not come to bail me out. Even though he's gone now, I'm still grateful for that lesson; it inspired the dedication to perfection that I now have.

As I stepped out of the diner – without my double espresso – half a block away there was a normal looking man, not older than fifty-seven. He was wearing jeans, a green flannel shirt, a winter cap, gloves, and work boots. It was a chilly day, and the bookstore he was near was obviously undergoing renovations. I determined that he must have been a worker taking a coffee break and pushed the sight to the back of my mind. Then I saw the scar. I passed by him at a distance of not less than five feet, and I could see it clearly. From the corner of his left eye to the corner of his mouth, there was a clear and distinct scar. A rather remarkable scar, I thought. It gave him the visage of a warrior. He had clearly gotten the scar in combat. At his age, he had probably fought in Vietnam. But, then again, no, he didn't look like a Vietnam vet. He didn't have the right look. When my father came home from Vietnam, he had had the look. It was a look that you see in a man's eyes, a look that comes from the knowledge that you were exploited for your patriotism. That look wasn't in the eyes of the man with the scar. He couldn't have gotten the scar in combat.

Thus, I arrived at work unfulfilled. I spent all day dropping reports on the floor, and I've never had to use so much White Out in my life. It was truly irritating. I can't stand it when my work is riddled with mistakes. My boss even called me into her office to make sure I was all right. I was humiliated by the meeting and did not hesitate to tell her so. She was understanding enough, but my encounter made me wonder even more about the scar. Had he gotten it on the job? Yes, a construction worker could easily get a scar like that on the job. This made sense, but then so did a million other things. He could have gotten it in a car accident, a household accident, a bar fight, an armed robbery, from a rabid dog, or even a bear attack. The possibilities were overwhelmingly endless.

I left work having made more mistakes than I had since third grade long division, but I still didn't have a satisfying answer as to the origin of that man's scar. I came up with forty-two different postulates, but not a single proof for any. I resolved to ask the man directly if I should see him when I was returning home.

At the same spot as in the morning, he was standing by the bookstore. I walked right up to him.

"Good day, sir. I --" the words caught in my throat. The scar wasn't there. I was stupefied. "What? How?"

"Can I help you?" The man was staring at me as though I were neurotic. This angered me some, but in the interests of being polite, I tried not to show it. Of course, why should I have been polite? Looking at someone as though he is a mental ward escapee isn't very polite either, now is it? I forced myself to continue. "You had a scar. On your face. I saw it. This morning I passed you and you had a scar on your face!"

He stared at me in a patronizing manner until recognition flashed across his leathery face. "Oh, hey...I remember you now. Yeah, you were that guy who was staring at me this morning."

"I don't stare."

"You did this morning. You were staring right at me."

"Your scar, I was looking at your scar!"

"Easy there, buddy. I don't have a scar." He paused. "There was some caulk that landed on my face. I think that's what you may have saw." His voice was patronizing, soothing. It made me furious.

"Caulk? Caulk? Caulk!" My knees went weak and I fainted.

The man crouched to catch me, sparing my head a smart crack on the pavement. All I remember about the two minutes that followed is the smell of English Leather Cologne. This man was wearing an inordinately large amount of it, and its scent overwhelmed me while I was in the state of half-consciousness.

After the two minutes had passed, I came to. English Leather Cologne and the silhouette of the man without the scar were my first impressions.

"Hey, buddy...are you okay? Do you need someone to take you to the emergency room?" I looked at the stranger for a moment, feeling like a child. Then I got to my feet as soon as I could, apologized profusely, and continued home.

The next morning, I walked the same route to work. As I came to the diner, its open doors beckoned. I passed them by without a second thought.

YOU CAN'T EAT FLOWERS

anthony stewart

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

I am the soil bare shell of a seed not planted.
Fed liquid to nurture false memories.
I have the perfumed scent of senseless stuck in
my nose
The place you once placed kisses hurts to know,
the tragic result of my own inhalation.

heather herrmann-miller

THE HERMIT IN MY FAMILY

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

OUR ARGUMENT

heather herrmann-miller

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

I'd agree with you.
Arguably, Lake Michigan
could be considered
one of the most
beautiful places ever.
Lake Huron's icy coldness
pales in comparison,
its jagged, moss-covered
rocks stick out like
human heads.
Wind whips its sand
into zebra-muscle piles,
and when it hits my
nose and throat,
fishy seaweed chokes me.
Except
on cold mornings like today.
My frosted breath patterns
the sky,
and silver and green waters
crash onto a
golden shoreline.

I learned the most
about you,
only after you died.
Our truck pulled up
your gravel driveway
ready to empty your
life on a flatbed,
and tow you away.

I don't remember you
when I was a girl,
never bothered with you
as I became a woman,
but I greedily fingered
your goods like
the rest of them,
anxious to patent
my heritage.

I wandered your rooms,
stacks of yellowed paper
gathered in heaps:
receipts, bills, and letters
linked you to the outside world.
Clothes collected and tagged,
mothball scented, stained and outdated,
packaged and sent away.
Pictures too,
outlines left on dirty walls,
dust and grime frames.

After came the dishes,
sparse, because it seemed
you were never big on eating.
I pilfered three saucers
with roses on them,
grainy cracks running
across china like
deep grooves in your
wrinkled face.

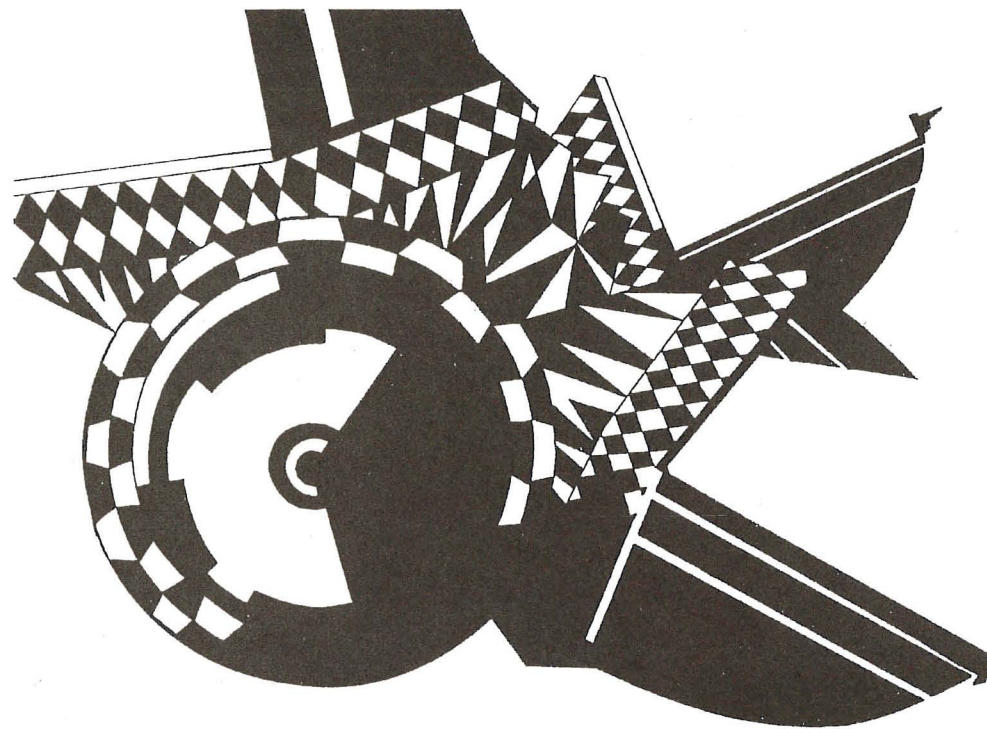
Then I saw your ships.
Lined along your basement wall
you had formed a one man
factory.
Wood in various stages was
bowed, bent, sanded and
painted,
while bolts, screws, nails,
needles, buttons, snaps,
bottlecaps,
and tacks lined your walls in
tiny glass jars of all
shapes and sizes.

We weren't able to
carry you out
in one trip.

My hands rested on glass,
metal, wood, and plastic,
marring your fingerprints.

ACORN DESIGN I
SELECTION OF MERIT

anthony stewart



amanda cutler

SPRING

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

She lies
curled up inside the walls of his heart, papered
with old love letters and the things he never says, just
assumes she knows.

She closes her eyes and his words,
"There's nothing you can do, I have to
work through this on my own."

become softened and faraway, muffled
by the rhythm of his heart.

She cannot witness his distant stare that means
he's at work again, bringing it home.

Inside the slippery softness, she
stores up for a long winter, awaiting the Spring that is us
beginning again.

CAGED

amanda cutler

SELECTION OF MERIT POETRY

Above all,
she didn't want to hurt him. He was there
always.

The office, school –
her friends were now his –
his own careful efforts.

He truly had no one but
her. It was what he had centered his life on.

And her friends, they could not see
the manipulation, the unwanted I love you's. They
only saw the willingness to do anything
for her – except

let it go. So instead, she let it go –
the freedom she felt

when he wasn't around,
the sense of knowing that her friends
were hers – that thing they call

identity. Until she spoke of an ex-boyfriend
that she referred to as a friend. And he said,

"He sounds like a cool guy, I'd
like to hang out with him sometime," and
she broke.

She let it go for him. Above all,
she wanted to hurt him.

FLOWER GIRL
SELECTION OF MERIT

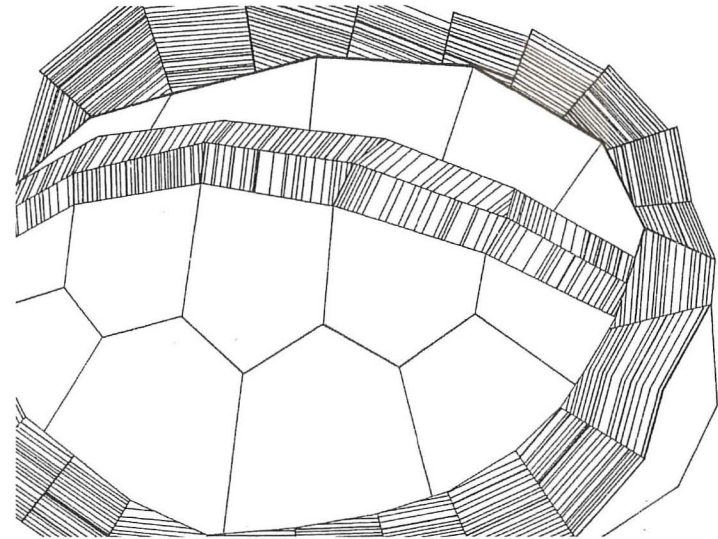
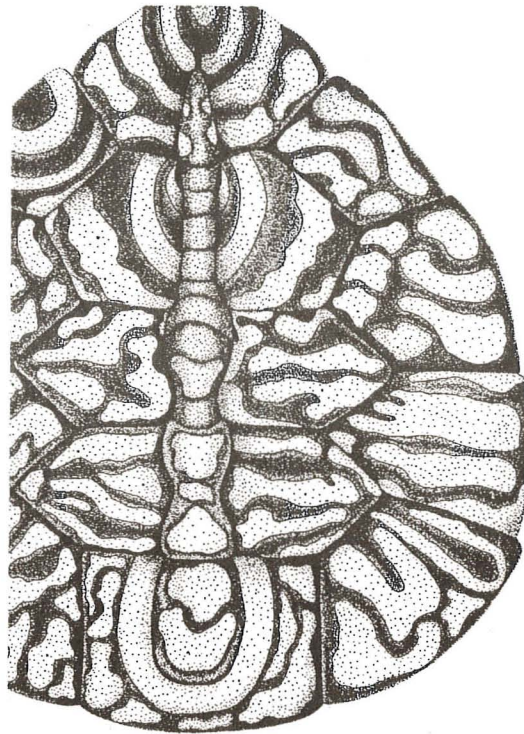
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TEXTURED/GEOMETRIC TURTLE SHELLS

SELECTION OF MERIT



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For further information on **Friends of the Arts**, contact Kay McGuigan, SC4, 323 Erie Street, P.O. Box 5015, Port Huron, Michigan 48061-5015, phone 810/984-3881.

andrea bernard

JOHN LENNON

SELECTION OF MERIT

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